

VOL. 3



BUDGE'S

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

2025 SEASON PREVIEW

BUDGE'S
TOP 25

PG. 6



THE TOP PLAYERS
IN THE NATION AT
EVERY POSITION

PG. 129

COMPLETE 12-TEAM
CFP PREDICTIONS
AND BOWL PICKS

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@cfbudge



LETTER FROM THE CREATOR

HEAD COACH: Tyler Budge
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Indiana Jones (my cat)
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Madeleine Williamson



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

TOP 25 ACCURACY: 16/25

CONF. CHAMP ACCURACY:
11/20

CFP PREDICTION ACCURACY:
6/12

GAMES ATTENDED: 18

FIELD STORMINGS: 3

TIK TOK FOLLOWERS: 128.1k

YOUTUBE FOLLOWERS: 16.7k

X FOLLOWERS: 12.3k

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS: 16k

MAGAZINES SOLD: 956

2024 was another incredible opportunity for me to cover the sport I love, and I'm beyond grateful for the platform I have to talk about it. I'm especially thankful for everyone who supports me—if you're reading this magazine, that means you're one of them.

The CFBudge Tour made its return in a big way, as I was able to surpass last season's total of 13 games traveled to and made an incredible 18 stops throughout the year. Highlights included a memorable birthday weekend where I attended three games in three days, and three field stormings during the season (four if you count the premature field storming Arizona State had against BYU). A magical season from the Sun Devils allowed me to follow my alma mater all the way to the Big 12 title game, where I watched them claim their first conference championship since 2007.

Our social media presence continued to grow throughout 2024, hitting the major milestone of 100k followers on TikTok. We've since soared past that number in the offseason and, for now at least, cleared the hurdle of a potential government ban (for now). Chances are, if you're reading this you're already following, but if not—feel free to check it out!

As for my preseason predictions, there were some hits and some definite misses. Iowa State was the crown jewel of my picks, finishing as a top-15 team and earning a spot in the Big 12



Tyler Budge

Photo by Tyler Budge / CFBudge

title game, just as I projected. I also correctly anticipated down years for both Oklahoma and Oklahoma State. On the flip side, some of the misses were rough—like picking Indiana and Arizona State to finish last in their conferences, only for both to make the College Football Playoff. But with the chaos and unpredictability of the season, I consider getting over half the conference title participants right—and nailing a majority of the final Top 25—a solid success.

Looking ahead to 2025, my focus has already shifted to the season ahead. I'll have my Arizona State season tickets as always, but I'm eyeing several exciting travel opportunities this fall. At the top of my bucket list: the Red River Shootout in mid-October, one of the marquee Week 1 matchups, and Oregon State's October 4th game at one of the most scenic stadiums in the country.

If you ever spot me at a game or see me in the stands, don't hesitate to come say hi! I always enjoy chatting with fellow fans who share my passion for college football.

I'm incredibly excited to share the 2025 edition of this preview magazine with you. It's nearly 170 pages long—almost 30 more than last year—and packed with even more content than Volume Two. Inside, you'll find record predictions, position unit ratings, and breakdowns for all 136 FBS programs. I poured a lot of time and energy into this edition, and I truly hope it adds to your excitement for the upcoming season.

Thank you again for helping fuel my obsession with this beautiful sport. Here's to an unforgettable 2025 season!

2024 CFBUDGE TOUR

Aug. 31	WYO @ ASU
Sept. 1	LSU vs USC
Sept. 7	MISS ST @ ASU
Sept. 14	UO @ ORST
Sept. 28	UNC @ DUKE
Oct. 4	SU @ UNLV
Oct. 5	KU @ ASU
Oct. 11	UTAH @ ASU
Oct. 17	BC @ VA TECH
Oct. 18	FSU @ DUKE
Oct. 19	UVA @ CLEM
Oct. 26	BSU @ UNLV
Nov. 2	UO @ MICH
Nov. 16	HOU @ UA
Nov. 23	BYU @ ASU
Nov. 30	ASU @ UA
Dec. 7	ASU vs ISU
Jan. 1, 2025	OSU vs UO

2025 CFBUDGE TOUR RADAR

Aug. 28	ECU @ NC ST
Aug. 30	LSU @ CLEM
Aug. 30	NAU @ ASU
Sept. 1	SCAR vs VA TECH
Sept. 2	TCU @ UNC
Sept. 6	MICH @ OU
Sept. 6	IOWA @ ISU
Sept. 6	UCLA @ UNLV
Sept. 13	TEX ST @ ASU
Sept. 13	FLA @ LSU
Sept. 20	TTU @ UTAH
Sept. 20	SMU @ TCU
Sept. 27	TCU @ ASU
Oct. 4	OR ST @ APP ST
Oct. 11	ASU @ UTAH
Oct. 11	OU vs TEX
Oct. 18	TTU @ ASU
Oct. 18	UTAH @ BYU
Oct. 25	TAMU @ LSU
Oct. 25	MICH @ MSU
Nov. 1	GA TECH @ NC ST
Nov. 1	WAZZU @ OR ST
Nov. 5	NIU @ TOL
Nov. 8	LSU @ BAMA
Nov. 15	WVU @ ASU
Nov. 22	DUKE @ UNC
Nov. 22	TENN @ FLA
Nov. 29	UA @ ASU



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Kaytron Allen

Penn State Athletics



Benny Beaver

Mascot Hall of Fame

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The Cotton Bowl

Johann Castro / KVUE



BUDGE'S PRESEASON TOP 25 AND AWARD PREDICTIONS

1

PENN STATE



The Nittany Lions return nearly every key difference-maker from last year's offense and added some major pieces through the portal. If Jim Knowles can work his magic on the defense, Penn State might be partying like it's 1986.

2

ALABAMA



Many underestimated the difficult circumstances Kalen DeBoer faced in his first season. Now, with a full offseason under his belt and a retooled staff around him, Alabama is poised to return to the national title conversation.

3

TEXAS



The Longhorns' ability to reload at an elite level will be put to the test this year. With star power across the board, Texas has the talent to compete at the highest level and should be back in the CFP with a shot at another deep run.

4

NOTRE DAME



After falling just short in the national title game, the Fighting Irish responded with a productive offseason, regrouping for another championship push. Among Notre Dame may have the clearest path back to the CFP of any major contender.



Drew Allar

Dale Zanine / USA Today Sports

5

LSU



An excellent cast of offensive play-makers will lead the way, but it's LSU's renewed focus on elite defensive play that stands out. If Blake Baker can unlock this group's potential, the Bayou Bengals could be a real threat.

6

OHIO STATE



The defending national champions still boast one of the most talented rosters in the country but enter 2025 with plenty of unknowns. A new staff, a new QB, and a largely unproven roster leave several key questions to be answered.

7

GEORGIA



The Bulldogs aim to reclaim their identity this season and bounce back from what was ultimately a disappointing year. If they can reestablish their trademark ground game, they'll be a tough out in the SEC.

8

CLEMSON



The stars have aligned for the Tigers this season, with two of the nation's top coordinators and the most returning production in college football. Anything short of a deep playoff run would be a disappointment.

9

OREGON



The Ducks will once again field a talented roster, but they'll rely on far less proven production than in years past. Fortunately, staff continuity and a proven system provide a strong foundation for the season.

10

TEXAS A&M



Last season unfolded much like previous years for Aggies fans, but all signs point to Mike Elko steering the program the right way. This could be the breakout year they've been patiently waiting for.

11

ARIZONA STATE



Kenny Dillingham and the Sun Devils have the momentum and returning core to propel themselves toward another Big 12 title. A major win for the program was keeping its underrated coaching staff intact.

12

USC



The Trojans' drastic defensive improvement last season went largely unnoticed amid a down year. With the offense expected to return to form, USC could emerge as one of the biggest turnaround stories of 2025.

13

OKLAHOMA



The Sooners have an excellent defense that should raise their floor this season. Their offensive upside, bolstered by new transfer portal additions, is impossible to ignore and could carry the team through a daunting schedule.

AWARD PREDICTIONS

GEORGE MUNGER AWARD (HEAD COACH):

Lincoln Riley, USC

BROYLES AWARD (ASSISTANT COACH):

Jim Knowles, PENN STATE

HEISMAN TROPHY:

Garrett Nussmeier, LSU

MAXWELL AWARD (BEST PLAYER):

Cade Klubnik, CLEMSON

WALTER CAMP (BEST PLAYER):

Garrett Nussmeier, LSU

BILETNIKOFF AWARD (RECEIVER):

Ryan Williams, ALABAMA

DOAK WALKER AWARD (RUNNINGBACK):

Makhi Hughes, OREGON

DAVEY O'BRIEN AWARD (QUARTERBACK):

Cade Klubnik, CLEMSON

JOHNNY UNITAS AWARD (SENIOR QB):

Drew Allar, PENN STATE

JOHN MACKEY AWARD (TIGHT END):

Eli Stowers, VANDERBILT

RIMMINGTON TROPHY (CENTER):

Jake Slaughter, FLORIDA

JOE MOORE AWARD (O-LINE):

TEXAS

BEDNARIK AWARD (DEFENSIVE PLAYER):

Dylan Stewart, SOUTH CAROLINA

BRONK NAGURSKI (DEFENSIVE PLAYER):

Caleb Downs, OHIO STATE

BUTKUS AWARD (LINEBACKER):

Whit Weeks, LSU

JIM THORPE (DEFENSIVE BACK):

Eli Bowen, OKLAHOMA

TED HENDRICKS AWARD (DEFENSIVE END):

Dani Dennis-Sutton, PENN STATE

PAUL HORNUNG (MOST VERSATILE):

Isaac Brown, LOUISVILLE

LOU GROZA (PLACE-KICKER):

Randy Bond, TEXAS A&M

RAY GUY (PUNTER):

Sam Johnson, USC

JET AWARD (PUNT/KICK RETURNER):

Parker Kingston, BYU

OUTLAND AWARD (INTERIOR LINEMAN):

Parker Brailsford, ALABAMA

BURLSWORTH TROPHY (WALK-ON):

Jackie Johnson III, HAWAII

EDDIE ROBINSON AWARD (FCS COACH):

Brennan Marion, SACRAMENTO STATE

JERRY RICE AWARD (FR. FCS PLAYER):

Jackson Wiley, YOUNGSTOWN STATE

WALTER PAYTON AWARD (FCS PLAYER):

Derek Robertson, MONMOUTH

14

TEXAS TECH



Few teams invested as heavily for the 2025 season as Texas Tech. The Red Raiders hope their top-ranked transfer portal class will propel them to a breakout year and patch some of last season's holes.

15

FLORIDA



The Gators appear poised to build on their 2024 success with renewed confidence under Billy Napier. Florida enters 2025 with more certainty than they've had in years and could deliver a truly special season.

16

GEORGIA TECH



Brent Key's Yellow Jackets play with a chip on their shoulder, giving them an intangible edge in big games. Their rock-solid identity and returning cast of contributors position them as strong ACC contenders this year.

17

INDIANA



The 2025 season should prove that last year wasn't just lightning in a bottle for the Hoosiers. After landing another impressive transfer class, Indiana has earned trust in its portal evaluations and will be a Big Ten title contender.

18

WASHINGTON



A rising group of talented players in Seattle has the potential to deliver big results in Jedd Fisch's second season. Their high-level talent and strong transfer portal class make them a serious threat in the Big Ten this year.

19

MICHIGAN



Sherrone Moore made the necessary adjustments this offseason to fix what was a complete disaster on offense. The Wolverines should have what it takes to return to Big Ten contention this year.

20

LOUISVILLE



With an excellent track record in the transfer portal and a clear identity, Jeff Brohm has turned the Cardinals into perennial ACC title contenders. In 2025, Louisville will once again be a serious factor in the playoff race.

21

MIAMI



The Hurricanes have been stacking elite talent in the ACC but have consistently struggled in November. Miami will have another opportunity this season and is hoping they found another portal gem in Carson Beck.

22

BAYLOR



Dave Aranda's squad looks to build on an outstanding late-season turnaround from 2024. Few teams can match the Bears' returning production this season as they aim for a more complete campaign.

23

SOUTH CAROLINA



The Gamecocks found success in 2024 with an elite pass rush and have all the tools to replicate that dominance this season. LaNorris Sellers possesses the makings of a future star, adding major upside to the team.

24

KANSAS STATE



The Wildcats have been a model of consistency in the Big 12 and will factor into the conference title race once again. In a transfer portal-driven landscape, Kansas State's focus on player development truly stands out.

25

TULANE



The Green Wave secured an elite transfer portal class by Group of Five standards, positioning themselves as a top-tier contender in the AAC. Among the Group of Five CFP hopefuls, Tulane leads the pack this season.



ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. CLEMSON	10-4 (7-1)
2. SMU	11-3 (8-0)
3. MIAMI	10-3 (6-2)
4. SYRACUSE	10-3 (5-3)
5. LOUISVILLE	9-4 (5-3)
6. GEORGIA TECH	7-6 (5-3)
7. DUKE	9-4 (5-3)
8. VIRGINIA TECH	6-7 (4-4)
9. BOSTON COLLEGE	7-6 (4-4)
10. PITTSBURGH	7-6 (3-5)
11. NC STATE	6-7 (3-5)
12. N. CAROLINA	6-7 (3-5)
13. VIRGINIA	5-7 (3-5)
14. CALIFORNIA	6-7 (2-6)
15. WAKE FOREST	4-8 (2-6)
16. STANFORD	3-9 (2-6)
17. FLORIDA STATE	2-10 (1-7)

2024 marked a return to form for the ACC, with **Clemson** capturing their eighth conference title in the last 10 seasons. The Tigers' path to the championship wasn't smooth, as they suffered an ugly home loss to Louisville and dropped both of their marquee non-conference games.

SMU emerged as the conference's surprise team, rallying from a slow start to a nine-game winning streak that included an undefeated 8-0 finish in ACC play. The Mustangs were just one bounce away from winning the conference in their inaugural ACC season.

For much of the year, **Miami** appeared to be the favorite to claim the ACC crown, but once again stumbled late in the season. The Hurricanes' defense remained their Achilles' heel, and Mario Cristobal's November record at Miami slipped to a staggering 4-8.

Fran Brown led **Syracuse** to an exciting breakout season, fueled by a strong core of transfer portal players. The Orange are in good hands for the foreseeable future.

Louisville delivered the most emphatic conference win of the season with a road victory over Clemson. However, inconsistency haunted the Cardinals and culminated in a puzzling loss to Stanford the following week, effectively ending their ACC title hopes.

The Yellow Jackets navigated a brutal schedule to post an excellent conference showing. Under Brent Key, **Georgia Tech** is back to competing at a high level.

Manny Diaz and company capitalized on a light



Jamal Haynes

Jason Allen / AP Photo

early schedule, spending much of the season near the top of the standings. **Duke** wasn't quite ACC title caliber, but Diaz's first season showed plenty of promise.

Virginia Tech's 2024 campaign ultimately fell short of expectations, disappointing in what was supposed to be a payoff year for Brent Pry's rebuild.

Optimism and several big moments defined Bill O'Brien's first season at **Boston College**, where the program is clearly in good hands with a coach who genuinely wants to be there.

Pittsburgh endured a collapse for the ages, dropping their final six games after a perfect 7-0 start. While there were some positives, the season ended on a sour note.

NC State suffered the most from attrition and untimely injuries in the ACC but still managed to fight through adversity and secure a bowl appearance.

Early-season losses made it clear **North Carolina** was headed in the wrong direction under Mack Brown. Despite clawing into a bowl game, Brown was fired, ushering in a new era for the Tar Heels.

Virginia continued its steady, if modest, improvement under Tony Elliott, inching closer to bowl eligibility.

California's 2024 season will forever be filled with what-ifs. The Golden Bears had the talent for a special year but were plagued by one-score losses and missed opportunities.

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 29	GA TECH @ COLO
Aug. 30	CAL @ ORST
Aug. 30	LSU @ CLEM
Aug. 30	BAMA @ FSU
Aug. 30	TENN vs CUSE
Aug. 31	SCAR vs VA TECH
Aug. 31	ND @ MIAMI
Sept. 1	TCU @ UNC
Sept. 6	ILL @ DUKE
Sept. 13	DUKE @ TULANE
Sept. 20	SMU @ TCU
Nov. 28	UGA vs GA TECH
Nov. 29	CLEM @ SCAR
Nov. 29	FSU @ UF
Nov. 29	UK @ UL

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

BILL O'BRIEN, BC	B
JUSTIN WILCOX, CAL	C-
DABO SWINNEY, CLEM	A-
MANNY DIAZ, DUKE	A
MIKE NORVELL, FSU	F
BRENT KEY, GA TECH	B+
JEFF BROHM, UL	B+
MARIO CRISTOBAL, UM	B
DAVE DOEREN, NCST	D+
MACK BROWN, UNC	D
PAT NARDUZZI, PITT	C-
RHETT LASHLEE, SMU	A+
TROY TAYLOR, STAN	D+
FRAN BROWN, SU	A+
TONY ELLIOTT, UVA	C
BRENT PRY, VA TECH	C-
DAVE CLAWSON, WAKE	C-

Wake Forest's 2024 campaign marked a second consecutive year without a bowl appearance and ultimately the end of an era under Dave Clawson. Despite that, the Demon Deacons fought hard and notched a pair of conference wins.

The Cardinal struggled mightily in their first ACC season, but brought a bit of **Stanford's** disease with them from the Pac-12, delivering baffling upset wins over two of the conference's top-five finishers.

There's little left to say about **Florida State's** disastrous 2024 season—it was as bad as it gets, and the Seminoles are ready to move on.

ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Gio Lopez, NORTH CAROLINA

OPOY: Antonio Williams, CLEMSON

DPOY: Amare Campbell, NORTH CAROLINA

COACH OF THE YEAR: Brent Key, GEORGIA TECH

1. CLEMSON: The stars have aligned for the Tigers this season, with two of the nation's top coordinators and the most returning production in college football. Anything short of a deep playoff run would be a disappointment.

2. GEORGIA TECH Brent Key's Yellow Jackets play with a chip on their shoulder, giving them an intangible edge in big games. Their rock-solid identity and returning cast of contributors position them as strong ACC contenders this year.

3. LOUISVILLE With an excellent track record in the transfer portal and a clear identity, Jeff Brohm has turned the Cardinals into perennial ACC title contenders. In 2025, Louisville will once again be a serious factor in the playoff race.

4. MIAMI The Hurricanes have been stacking elite talent in the ACC but have consistently struggled in November. Miami will have another opportunity this season and is hoping they found another portal gem in Carson Beck.

5. SMU Despite low returning production numbers, the Mustangs have a solid core of returning players who could guide them to another ACC title game appearance. Their schedule gets tougher this season, highlighted by a challenging mid-October matchup at Clemson.

6. NORTH CAROLINA Excitement surrounds Bill Belichick's first season in Chapel Hill, as the six-time Super Bowl-winning head coach makes his college debut. Belichick inherits solid existing infrastructure to build upon, putting him in a strong position to succeed.

7. VIRGINIA TECH Brent Pry has shaken things up for the Hokies this season, and his aggressive offseason approach could pay off. New coordinator hires combined with heavy transfer portal usage create a wide range of possible outcomes this year.



Kyron Drones

Brian Bishop / Imagn Images

8. PITTSBURGH The Panthers look poised to build on the positive signs shown in 2024. If they can stay healthy, Pittsburgh should produce more consistent offensive performances this season.

9. FLORIDA STATE While not a high bar, the Seminoles are expected to improve on their 2024 struggles. At minimum, new coaching additions Tony White and Gus Malzahn should provide better leadership and development.

10. SYRACUSE Fran Brown and the Orange may face a soft reset in 2025, as a large group of young players steps into bigger roles amidst a tough schedule.

11. NC STATE This is a pivotal year for Dave Doeren, who overhauled his staff in the offseason and will break in two new coordinators. The Wolfpack's exciting young core could take a big leap if these hires prove successful.

12. DUKE The Blue Devils face major questions at skill positions and in their front seven, but additions like Darian Mensah bring promising talent that could make an impact.

13. VIRGINIA Tony Elliott remains steady with the Cavaliers, who may leverage staff continuity and a strong transfer portal class for a successful fourth season under his leadership.

14. BOSTON COLLEGE Bill O'Brien's dedication to the program is encouraging, but several factors could keep the Eagles mired in their perennial mediocrity this season.

15. CALIFORNIA A sudden spring transfer

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 13	CLEM @ GA TECH
Sept. 27	VA TECH @ NC ST
Oct. 4	CLEM @ UNC
Oct. 4	MIAMI @ FSU
Oct. 11	VA TECH @ GA TECH
Oct. 18	SMU @ CLEM
Oct. 18	GA TECH @ DUKE
Oct. 18	UL @ MIAMI
Oct. 31	UNC @ SYRACUSE
Nov. 1	UL @ VA TECH
Nov. 1	MIAMI @ SMU
Nov. 8	FSU @ CLEM
Nov. 14	CLEM @ UL
Nov. 15	MIAMI @ VA TECH
Nov. 29	UNC @ NC ST

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (14)	MIAMI
2. (19)	FLORIDA STATE
3. (21)	GEORGIA TECH
4. (26)	CLEMSON
5. (30)	DUKE
6. (31)	SMU
7. (34)	NC STATE
8. (36)	NORTH CAROLINA
9. (40)	VIRGINIA TECH
10. (42)	SYRACUSE
11. (51)	PITTSBURGH
12. (56)	STANFORD
13. (58)	VIRGINIA
14. (59)	BOSTON COLLEGE
15. (63)	WAKE FOREST
16. (68)	LOUISVILLE
17 (70)	CALIFORNIA

portal exodus has left the Golden Bears' offense in a difficult position. Justin Wilcox will do his best to salvage the season, but challenges loom large.

16. WAKE FOREST Jake Dickert built a solid staff and will field an intriguing team that could contend for a bowl appearance. Rob Ezell was an underrated offseason hire.

17. STANFORD The Cardinals' offseason drama was well documented, including the firing of their head coach and the loss of many top players through the transfer portal, which will significantly impact the team.



BOSTON COLLEGE EAGLES

HEAD COACH: Bill O'Brien
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Will Lawing
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Lewis

RANK: 75

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Pinstripe Bowl

BOSTON COLLEGE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2004

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 32nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Donovan
Ezeiruaku, OT Ozzy Trapilo, LB
Kam Arnold, DT Cam Horsley,
RB Kyle Robichaux

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Tommy
Matheson, QB Dylan Lonergan,
DE Onye Nwosisi

OFFENSE: Offensive limitations hindered the ceiling of this team in 2024, but the staff has worked tirelessly to rewrite that narrative this season.

The most exciting and public addition to the offense is Alabama QB Dylan Lonergan, a former 4-star passer from the 2023 class with sky-high potential. Still, senior QB Grayson James remains on the roster after starting for the Eagles at the tail end of 2024 and playing solid football—he may still be the guy. Bill O'Brien has a strong track record of developing and coaching QBs, so it's fair to expect quality play under center regardless of who starts.

At RB, the challenge will be replacing the production of Kyle Robichaux and Treshaun Ward. However, the running game has historically



Carter Davis

247 Sports

been a committee effort and returns Jordan McDonald and Turbo Richard, who combined for over 100 carries last season. Suffice it to say, the Eagles should field a steady ground attack.

The WR room was a major weakness in 2024, with the leading receiver failing to eclipse 700 yards or 70 receptions. Much of the pass-catching burden will now fall to TE Jeremiah Franklin and incoming transfer Zeke Moore. Despite last year's struggles, there is optimism that improved QB play and the return of Lewis Bond and Reed Harris can help the passing game take a significant step forward.

Boston College returns just two offensive linemen from 2024, but this unit should remain strong—OL play has been a consistent strength for the Eagles in recent years. Transfers Tommy Matheson and Amir Johnson are projected to start, and the depth chart features several experienced upperclassmen.

DEFENSE: Second year defensive coordinator Tim Lewis looks to build off of an excellent defensive season, but will be tasked with replacing some elite talent that was lost in the offseason.

The Eagles hope to replicate their lost production collectively on the D-line. Quintavious Hutchins, Owen Stoudmire, and Edwin Kolenge all bring valuable game experience, though none were full-time starters last season.

Daveon Crouch and Owen McGowan return to solidify the middle of the defense at LB. Boston College ranked an impressive 5th in rush yards allowed in the ACC last year.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Fordham
Sept. 6	@ Michigan State
Sept. 13	@ Stanford
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	California
Oct. 4	@ Pittsburgh
Oct. 11	Clemson
Oct. 18	UConn
Oct. 25	@ Louisville
Nov. 1	Notre Dame
Nov. 8	SMU
Nov. 15	Georgia Tech
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 29	@ Syracuse

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	65/100

The secondary took a hit with the loss of leader Khari Johnson. In his absence, sophomore safety Carter Davis will be relied upon to lead a relatively inexperienced group.

OVERVIEW: A strong running game and stout run defense helped Boston College to a promising start under Bill O'Brien. However, the program continues to wrestle with perennial mediocrity—the last time the Eagles finished with more than seven wins was in 2009.

Reaching the eight-win mark won't be easy in 2025. The Eagles face a tough non-conference slate with games against Notre Dame and Michigan State, and also drew five of the top six finishers in the ACC from last season. The one saving grace of their schedule is a three game home stand in November.

Still, Bill O'Brien has shown genuine commitment to the program and has Boston College trending in the right direction.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)

CALIFORNIA GOLDEN BEARS

HEAD COACH: Justin Wilcox
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryan Harsin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Terrence Brown, Vic So'oto

RANK: 78



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 14th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the LA Bowl

CALIFORNIA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2006

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 83rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 3 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Fernando Mendoza, DB Nohl Williams, DB Craig Woodson, LB Teddy Buchanan, RB Jaydn Ott

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Devin Brown, OL Tyson Ruffins, OL Jordan Spasojevic-Moko, WR Jacob De Jesus

OFFENSE: A Jekyll-and-Hyde offense in 2024 was stripped down to the studs this offseason, headlined by the hiring of new offensive coordinator Bryan Harsin.

The revamped attack will feature a new QB, with Ohio State transfer Devin Brown battling sophomore EJ Caminong for the starting job. However, many eyes are on true freshman Jaron-Keawe Sagapolutele, a former 4-star recruit who could emerge if he progresses quickly.

Cal's running game was limited last season due to a nagging ankle injury to star RB Jaydn Ott. Now, the Bears must move forward without him after his surprising departure this spring—along with every other proven RB on the roster. This has left the position group vulnerable and thin, with redshirt freshman Jamaal Wiley expected



Cade Uluave

Cody Henderson / The League Winners

to step into a major role, possibly before he's ready. Late portal addition Kendrick Raphael from NC State could be the saving grace they needed.

The WR room also needed reinforcements after losing its top two receivers, and the TE position took a major hit with phenom Jack Endries departing. Former UNLV standout Jacob De Jesus is expected to play a key role in the pass-catching corps, and Trond Grizzell will be a stable option as a returning starter.

The offensive line will have a completely new look, with four projected starters arriving via the transfer portal. Whether this overhaul is a smart rebuild or a desperate patch remains to be seen—Cal finished 14th in the ACC in rushing and gave up 51 sacks last season.

DEFENSE: In late February, defensive coordinator Peter Sirmon was hired by the New Orleans Saints to coach LBs. In response, head coach Justin Wilcox promoted DB coach Terrence Brown and LB coach Vic So'oto to co-defensive coordinators.

There's a lot to like up front, where T.J. Bollers, Nate Burrell, and Aidan Keanaaina return to anchor a unit that ranked near the top of the ACC in rush defense.

At LB, Cal reloads yet again—something of a tradition under Wilcox—with Cade Uluave set to be the centerpiece of the defense.

The secondary, while still solid in 2024, was the team's clear weakness. With three senior starters now gone, Cal turned to the transfer

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Oregon State
Sept. 6	Texas Southern
Sept. 13	Minnesota
Sept. 20	@ San Diego State
Sept. 27	@ Boston College
Oct. 4	Duke
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 17	North Carolina
Oct. 24	@ Virginia Tech
Nov. 1	Virginia
Nov. 8	Louisville
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	@ Stanford
Nov. 29	SMU

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	64/100

portal for reinforcements. Former Washington safety Tristan Dunn was a spring standout and is expected to play a major role in 2025.

OVERVIEW: Offensive inconsistency and five one-score losses plagued what could have been a special 2024 season for Cal. Had the roster stayed intact, the Golden Bears might've been a legitimate dark horse in the ACC title race.

Instead, key departures in the spring transfer portal and a late staff poaching have left the program on unstable ground. The response has been a flurry of portal activity—an aggressive offseason unlike any in Justin Wilcox's eight-year tenure at Cal.

The hope is that these bold moves will fix the offensive line, stabilize QB play, and maintain a high defensive standard. But the risk is real—portal rebuilds can backfire, and the Bears must avoid becoming the next cautionary tale.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)



CLEMSON TIGERS

HEAD COACH: Dabo Swinney
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Garrett Riley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tom Allen

RANK: 8

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-4 (7-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: 14th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost in the CFP First Round

CLEMSON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2024

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 1st

RETURNING STARTERS: 8 offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Payton Page, LB Barrett Carter, DB RJ Mickens, RB Phil Mafah, TE Jake Brinningstool

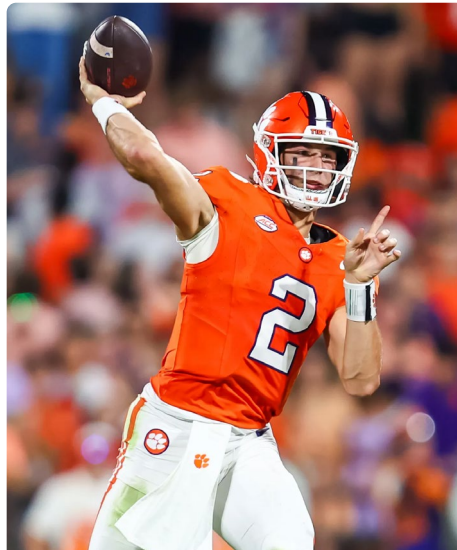
KEY ADDITIONS: WR Tristan Smith, DE Will Heldt, LB Jeremiah Alexander, RB Gideon Davidson, WR Juju Preston

OFFENSE: Dabo Swinney's decision to bring in offensive coordinator Garrett Riley finally paid off in 2024, as Clemson fielded an explosive offense that finished top 20 nationally in yards per game. Despite their gaudy overall numbers, the Tigers experienced a few lapses in big games.

QB Cade Klubnik was central to Clemson's offensive resurgence and will command the unit again in 2025. After a rocky start to his college career, Klubnik has emerged as one of the frontrunners for the Heisman Trophy.

The departure of RB Phil Mafah will be felt, but the Tigers are highly optimistic about freshman RB Gideon Davidson, who is expected to be a day-one starter.

Clemson boasts one of the best WR corps in



Cade Klubnik

Derrian Carter / Greenville News

the country. Antonio Williams will be one of the nation's best WRs, TJ Moore and Bryant Wesco Jr. return after breakout freshman campaigns, and in a rare portal move for Swinney, the Tigers added WR Tristan Smith from SE Missouri to bolster the unit even further.

Four of five starters return on the offensive line, and the depth here is equally impressive. Young players like Ronan O'Connell, Mason Wade, and Watson Young—all redshirts last season—add valuable depth and upside.

DEFENSE: One of the most eye-catching moves of the offseason was Clemson hiring Tom Allen away from Penn State to serve as defensive coordinator.

Surprisingly, the Tigers ranked near the bottom of the ACC in rush yards allowed last season—something Allen will look to fix immediately. DE T.J. Parker returns after leading the team with 11 sacks in 2024, and he'll be joined by high-profile portal addition DE Will Heldt.

LB play must improve if Clemson is to fulfill its national title hopes. The loss of All-American LB Barrett Carter is significant, but veterans Sammy Brown and Wade Woodaz are more than capable of stepping up. Transfer LB Jeremiah Alexander also arrives to strengthen the middle of the defense.

The secondary was the strength of the defense in 2024 and returns most of its key contributors, including All-ACC DB Avieon Terrell. Expect the defensive backfield to once again be a strength in 2025 and be a luxury for their new defensive staff as they look to continue their success.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	LSU
Sept. 6	Troy
Sept. 13	@ Georgia Tech
Sept. 20	Syracuse
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ North Carolina
Oct. 11	@ Boston College
Oct. 18	SMU
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Duke
Nov. 8	Florida State
Nov. 14	@ Louisville
Nov. 22	Furman
Nov. 29	@ South Carolina

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	90/100

OVERVIEW: Clemson dropped arguably its three biggest games of the 2024 regular season but rallied with an upset in the ACC Championship and secured a College Football Playoff berth along with a conference title.

That late-season momentum, paired with strong returning production, high-level recruiting, and a few savvy portal additions, has thrust Clemson into the national championship conversation.

The optimism is justified, but the Tigers face a challenging road in 2025. They'll open and close the regular season against LSU and South Carolina, respectively, and face a tough road trip to Louisville—a team that beat them in Death Valley last year.

Riley's offense took a year to hit its stride. Now Clemson needs Allen to elevate the defense immediately if the Tigers hope to meet their lofty aspirations this fall.

RECORD PREDICTION: 11-1 (7-1)

DUKE BLUE DEVILS

HEAD COACH: Manny Diaz
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jonathan Brewer
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jonathan Patke

RANK: 62



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Gator Bowl

DUKE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1989

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 59th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Maalik Murphy, WR Eli Pancol, WR Jordan Moore, DB Joshua Pickett, RB Star Thomas

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Josiah Green, LB Jaiden Francois, QB Darian Mensah, WR Andrei Anthony, WR Cooper Barkate

OFFENSE: Duke's offense left much to be desired in Manny Diaz's debut season with the Blue Devils. The running game struggled mightily, and despite strong pass protection, QB Maalik Murphy couldn't find consistency as a passer throughout the year.

Enter QB Darian Mensah, who dazzled as a freshman at Tulane in 2024 before transferring to Duke early in the portal cycle. The Blue Devils quickly named him their guy, parting ways with Murphy in a move that raised some eyebrows.

The run game remains a major concern. Jaquez Moore returns after missing most of last season due to injury, but even in limited action—just 32 carries—he averaged under three yards per attempt. Peyton Jones was a rotational contribu-



Chandler Rivers

Duke Athletics

tor in 2024 but also failed to eclipse four yards per carry.

Duke lost its top two receiving weapons from last season, including standout WR Jordan Moore. To fill the void, they added Cooper Barkate from the portal, who posted over 1,000 yards and 11 touchdowns at Harvard last year. He'll be expected to lead what is otherwise a thin receiver room.

The offensive line is Duke's most veteran group, returning several multi-year starters including Brian Parker II and Justin Pickett. While pass protection has been a strength, improvement in run blocking remains a priority.

DEFENSE: Manny Diaz's reputation as a defensive mastermind held true in his first year at Duke, as the defense turned in an impressive 2024 campaign.

The defensive line brings in Josiah Green from Dartmouth to bolster what was already a successful unit. Veteran DL Aaron Hall returns to anchor the group, which also features plenty of promising young talent ready to contribute.

At linebacker, a strong freshman class could help fill the gaps left by offseason departures. It's a "next man up" mentality in the middle of the defense, where Tre Freeman and Nick Morris Jr. are expected to take on larger roles.

The backbone of last year's team was its prolific secondary, which allowed just over 200 passing yards per game. All-ACC DBs Chandler Rivers and Terry Moore return, ensuring the back end remains a major strength.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Elon
Sept. 6	Illinois
Sept. 13	@ Tulane
Sept. 20	NC State
Sept. 27	@ Syracuse
Oct. 4	@ California
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	Georgia Tech
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Clemson
Nov. 8	@ UConn
Nov. 15	Virginia
Nov. 22	@ North Carolina
Nov. 29	Wake Forest

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	71/100

OVERVIEW: Miami football pulled the plug on Manny Diaz after just three seasons in 2021. Since then, Diaz has rebuilt his résumé, thriving as Penn State's defensive coordinator before getting his second shot as a head coach at Duke.

Year one was a success, with the Blue Devils improving on their 2023 win total under Mike Elko. Now, excitement is building in Durham for a program that is starting to expect results.

That said, not everything is perfect. While Duke upgraded at quarterback and retained its standout secondary, major question marks remain at the skill positions and in the front seven for this team.

Additionally, the Blue Devils benefited from a notably easy schedule in 2024. That changes this season, and by October, we'll have a clear idea of whether Duke is ready to seriously contend in the ACC.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (5-3)



FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

HEAD COACH: Mike Norvell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gus Malzahn
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony White

RANK: 55

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 2-10 (1-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 17th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

FLORIDA STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2023

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 47th

RETURNING STARTERS: 1
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: CB Azareye'h
Thomas, DL Joshua Farmer, DL
Sione Lolohea, RB Lawrence
Toafili, DL Patrick Payton

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Thomas
Castellanos, OL Luke Petitbon,
WR Duce Robinson, LB Stefon
Thompson, DL James Williams

OFFENSE: Florida State's historic collapse in 2024 was directly tied to its lifeless offensive production. Gus Malzahn has been brought in to lead a complete overhaul heading into 2025.

Former Boston College QB Thomas Castellanos reunites with Malzahn in Tallahassee this season. Castellanos redshirted his freshman year at UCF when Malzahn was head coach, and while he showed flashes of elite playmaking over two seasons as BC's starter, his inconsistency as a passer limited his effectiveness.

Running back is one of the few position groups that didn't get a major facelift through the transfer portal. The Seminoles return Roydell Williams and Kam Davis as their primary options in the backfield, and should have what it takes to field an effective run game this season.



Charles Lester III

247 Sports

FSU completely revamped its receiving corps, bringing in experienced transfer WRs Squirrel White and Duce Robinson to inject life into what was one of the ACC's worst position groups in 2024. The returning TE Landen Thomas is one of the rare holdovers on this offense.

Up front, the Seminoles surrendered an ACC-worst 49 sacks last season and finished last in the league in rushing yards. To address this, they brought in a quartet of transfer linemen—Luke Petitbon, Adrian Medley, Micah Pettus, and Gunnar Hansen—all of whom are projected to start in 2025.

DEFENSE: Statistically, Florida State's 2024 defense was just as underwhelming as its offense, but the numbers don't tell the full story. Many solid defensive efforts were overshadowed by the ineptitude of the offense. To take the next step, FSU hired Nebraska defensive coordinator Tony White in a high-profile move aimed at building on those bright spots.

The defensive line was overmatched for much of last season, prompting an aggressive response. DE James Williams followed White from Nebraska after logging five sacks last year, but depth remains a concern. Freshman Kevin Wynn may be thrust into a significant role early.

At linebacker, another former Nebraska defender, Stefon Thompson, is expected to start alongside Memphis transfer Elijah Herring—arguably the most exciting portal addition the Seminoles made on defense.

The secondary is the only defensive unit that didn't get completely overhauled. Talented

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Alabama
Sept. 6	East Texas A&M
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	Kent State
Sept. 26	@ Virginia
Oct. 4	Miami (FL)
Oct. 11	Pittsburgh
Oct. 18	@ Stanford
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Wake Forest
Nov. 8	@ Clemson
Nov. 15	Virginia Tech
Nov. 21	@ NC State
Nov. 29	@ Florida

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	73/100

young DBs Charles Lester III and Edwin Joseph return after gaining valuable experience in 2024 and will look to anchor the back end.

OVERVIEW: Florida State's fall from grace in 2024 was as stunning as it was embarrassing. Mike Norvell entered the offseason with an overwhelming list of problems to solve.

His answer was bold: make two splash coordinator hires in Malzahn and White. On paper, the staff is improved across the board. Despite several high-profile departures through the transfer portal, it could be argued that the Seminoles may benefit from addition by subtraction.

That said, one of the root causes of last year's disaster was FSU's overreliance on the transfer portal—and once again, 11 incoming transfers are projected to start in 2025. Things remain uneasy in Tallahassee, but Norvell has been decisive. This season, Florida State is ready to live—or die—by the portal.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-4)

GEORGIA TECH YELLOW JACKETS

HEAD COACH: Brent Key
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Buster Faulkner, Chris Weinke
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Gideon

RANK: 17



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Birmingham Bowl

GEORGIA TECH AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2009

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 26th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Zach Pyron,
OL Weston Franklin, TE Jackson
Hawes, WR Chase Lane, WR
Eric Singleton Jr.

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Eric
Rivers, WR Dean Patterson, OL
Josh Petty, DL Matthew Alex-
ander, DB Kelvin Hill

OFFENSE: Few ACC teams had answers for Georgia Tech's offensive attack in 2024, which came to embody the toughness and mentality this coaching staff has instilled in its players.

Georgia Tech enters 2025 in a stable position at QB. Team captain Haynes King returns for his third season as the Yellow Jackets' starter, offering consistency and leadership. Behind him is redshirt freshman Aaron Philo, who led the team to a clutch late-season win over NC State and gives Georgia Tech a promising future option.

RB remains the most vital position in Buster Faulkner's offense. The Yellow Jackets return their top two backs in Jamal Haynes and Chad Alexander, and added Penn transfer Malachi Hosley — a 1,000-yard rusher in 2024 — to



Kyle Efford

Georgia Tech Athletics

round out a deep and talented room. Despite losing their leading WR from last season, the Jackets reloaded with FIU duo Eric Rivers and Dean Patterson, who combined for nearly 2,000 receiving yards last fall. Returning WR Malik Rutherford (700+ yards) gives King a reliable veteran target as well.

The OL will once again be a strength, led by returning starters Keylan Rutledge, Ethan Mackenny and Joe Fusile. The group has both experience and depth, and should continue to set the tone for this offense.

DEFENSE: The biggest transformation for GT last season came on defense, where DC Tyler Santucci worked wonders before earning an NFL opportunity. New DC Blake Gideon steps in as one of the sport's rising names, tasked with maintaining the Yellow Jackets' surge on this side of the ball.

The DL will feature several new faces, but they bring experience. Transfers AJ Hoffler, Matthew Alexander, and Ronald Triplette will join All-ACC DL Jordan van den Berg to form a revamped unit with high upside.

LB Kyle Efford was a viral sensation last season for his appearance, but his production speaks louder — he's a key leader for this defense. Georgia Tech is deep at this spot, thanks to Oregon State transfer Melvin Jordan and returners like Tah'j Butler and E.J. Lightsey.

The Yellow Jackets finished near the top of the ACC in pass defense last season, and bring back three starters in the secondary: S Clayton Powell-Lee, S Ahmari Harvey, and CB Rodney

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	@ Colorado
Sept. 6	Gardner-Webb
Sept. 13	Clemson
Sept. 20	Temple
Sept. 27	@ Wake Forest
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Virginia Tech
Oct. 18	@ Duke
Oct. 25	Syracuse
Nov. 1	@ NC State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Boston College
Nov. 22	Pittsburgh
Nov. 28	Georgia

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	86/100

Shelley, which will be a luxury for the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: Georgia Tech made a national impression in 2024 with multiple upsets and a wild 8OT game, signaling its emergence under Brent Key. The Yellow Jackets carried that momentum into a strong offseason and retained much of the core that powered last year's success.

Georgia Tech has the pieces to once again make noise in the ACC. King leads an experienced offense, the defense is built on proven veterans and promising new faces, and the staff has shown an ability to get the most out of this roster.

The fate of the Yellow Jackets' 2025 season may come down to whether first-year DC Blake Gideon can keep the defense on track. If he does, Georgia Tech could be a major player this season.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (7-1)



LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

HEAD COACH: Jeff Brohm
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Brohm
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Hagen, Ron English

RANK: 20

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won
the Sun Bowl

LOUISVILLE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2012

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 60th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Tyler Shough,
OL Michael Gonzalez, WR Ja'Co-
rey Brooks, DL Ashton Gillotte,
DB Quincy Riley

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Miller
Moss, WR Bobby Golden, OL
Makylan Pounders, DL Wesley
Bailey, DB Jojo Evans

OFFENSE: Louisville's offense thrived once again in 2024 under the direction of Brian Brohm, who continues to produce high-level results with a modern, QB-friendly system. Several key positions required retooling this offseason, and the Cardinals once again leaned on the transfer portal to reload.

QB Miller Moss becomes the third straight transfer signal-caller to start for Louisville under Brohm. While his USC tenure ended in disappointment, Moss was often unfairly scapegoated and now gets a clean slate with the Cardinals.

RB play continues to quietly be a major strength of this program. Isaac Brown and Duke Watson are back after combining for over 1,600 rushing yards and 18 TDs last season, giving Louisville



Isaac Brown

Jackson Brimfield / State of Louisville

one of the most reliable duos in the conference.

The WR room is loaded with experience and production. Caulin Lacy, who has over 2,000 career receiving yards, returns after missing most of 2024 with a collarbone injury. He'll be flanked by Chris Bell and Akron transfer Bobby Golden, both of whom are coming off strong campaigns.

The OL underwent some reshuffling despite a successful 2024 season. Portal additions Makylan Pounders and Jordan Church should slide into starting roles, while the return of veteran C Pete Nygra provides valuable continuity in the middle.

DEFENSE: Co-coordinators Ron English and Mark Hagen face the challenge of replacing a wave of departing talent—most notably Quincy Riley, Ashton Gillotte, and Corey Thornton, all of whom are bound for the NFL. It's a tall order, but this staff has a solid track record.

Louisville made key moves to reinforce the DL. One of the most exciting additions is Clev Lubin, who comes over from Coastal Carolina after a 9.5-sack season and should give the front immediate punch.

The LB corps is one of the most experienced in the conference, with TJ Quinn, Antonio Watts, and Stanquan Clark combining for more than 200 tackles last season. Their presence provides a steady foundation for the defense.

The secondary showed cracks at times in 2024, and Louisville moved decisively to address that. Transfers Jabar Mack, Jojo Evans, and Jabari

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Eastern Kentucky
Sept. 5	James Madison
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	Bowling Green
Sept. 27	@ Pittsburgh
Oct. 4	Virginia
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 17	@ Miami (FL)
Oct. 25	Boston College
Nov. 1	@ Virginia Tech
Nov. 8	California
Nov. 14	Clemson
Nov. 22	@ SMU
Nov. 29	Kentucky

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	86/100

Mack are all expected to push for starting roles, giving this unit a needed boost in coverage and depth.

OVERVIEW: Under Jeff Brohm, Louisville has become a consistent presence at the top of the Atlantic Coast Conference. That doesn't figure to change in 2025, even with the departure of several key players.

Last season, Louisville weathered the loss of four NFL-bound starters and still posted a nine-win campaign, including a road rout of the eventual conference champion. This fall, that same team—Clemson—must come to Louisville's house.

Staff continuity and continued success through the transfer portal give Louisville a strong foundation to build on. While the roster has changed, the results don't have to. This team has all the tools to make another serious run at the ACC crown.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (5-3)

MIAMI HURRICANES

HEAD COACH: Mario Cristobal
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shannon Dawson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Corey Heatherman

RANK: 21



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: 18th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Pop-Tarts Bowl

MIAMI AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2003

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 75th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3 offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Tyler Baron, DL Simeon Barrow, LB Francisco Mauigoa, RB Damien Martinez, QB Cam Ward

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Carson Beck, WR CJ Daniels, WR Malachi Toney, OL James Brockermeyer, DB Xavier Lucas

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Shannon Dawson enters 2025 with a tall task—replacing a long list of departing stars. Fortunately for Miami, talent acquisition hasn't been a problem, and both recruiting and the transfer portal have kept the roster well-stocked.

The headliner is QB Carson Beck, who stunned many by entering the transfer portal instead of the NFL Draft. The former Georgia signal caller brings experience and polish to an offense in need of a steady hand. The Hurricanes are excited about true freshman Luke Nickel as the future of the position, but Beck will lead for now.

Jordan Lyle and Mark Fletcher Jr. return after flashing promise at RB, and freshman Girard Pringle Jr. is a name to watch in a depth role within Dawson's rotation-heavy scheme.



Akheem Mesidor

Al Diaz / Miami Herald

The WR room lost a tremendous amount of production, but there's optimism about the rebuild. LSU transfer CJ Daniels is the top addition and will be leaned on early, while an influx of talent from the 2025 recruiting class helps restock the group. TE play should also be solid, with Jack Nickel and Alex Bauman arriving as pass-catching options for Beck.

OL play remains a pillar of Mario Cristobal's program. Miami returns three starters up front, and Alabama transfer James Brockermeyer adds strength to a unit that should once again be among the best in the ACC.

DEFENSE: Miami's defense had a few late-game collapses that colored the perception of the entire unit in 2024. To help turn the page, the Hurricanes brought in Corey Heatherman—who worked wonders at Minnesota—as the new defensive coordinator.

DT Rueben Bain Jr. is back and will anchor a D-line that loses much of its 2024 production. Players like DE Akheem Mesidor and rising star Armondo Blount are expected to take big steps forward in expanded roles.

At LB, Wesley Bissainthe returns as the heart of the defense. He led one of the ACC's best run-stopping units last season, and will be tasked with even more responsibility following the graduation of standout LB Francisco Mauigoa.

The secondary was a clear priority this offseason, and Miami acted accordingly. High-profile transfers Charles Brantley, Emmanuel Karnley, and Zechariah Prosser—who impressed as a

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Notre Dame
Sept. 6	Bethune-Cookman
Sept. 13	South Florida
Sept. 20	Florida
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Florida State
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 17	Louisville
Oct. 25	Stanford
Nov. 1	@ SMU
Nov. 8	Syracuse
Nov. 15	NC State
Nov. 22	@ Virginia Tech
Nov. 29	@ Pittsburgh

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	86/100

freshman at Jacksonville State—will bring immediate competition and playmaking potential to the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: With the top-ranked ACC recruiting class in each of the last three cycles, the Hurricanes now boast one of the most loaded rosters in the country.

But the biggest questions have nothing to do with personnel. Under Mario Cristobal, Miami has started hot before, only to fizzle down the stretch. The program's 4-8 record in November games under Cristobal remains a troubling trend.

This offseason brought more targeted changes rather than a full shakeup, with Heatherman's arrival on defense perhaps the most significant. The Hurricanes will have every opportunity to contend in the ACC—but turning talent into results, especially late in the year, remains the final hurdle.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (6-2)



NC STATE WOLFPACK

HEAD COACH: Dave Doeren
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kurt Roper
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: D. J. Eliot

RANK: 61

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Military Bowl

NC STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1979

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 36th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6 offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Anthony Belton, RB Jordan Waters, DL Davin Vann, OL Zeke Correll

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Brock Stukes, OL Jalen Grant, OL Teague Anderson, DB JJ Johnson, DL Sabastian Harsh, DB Cam Strong, OL Spike Sowells

OFFENSE: The NC State offense endured a turbulent 2024 season, and head coach Dave Doeren responded by making a major change this offseason, parting ways with offensive coordinator Robert Anae and promoting Kurt Roper to take over the unit.

One major silver lining was the emergence of QB CJ Bailey. Forced into action as a true freshman, Bailey flashed enough promise to solidify himself as the starter heading into 2025. With Roper—his lead recruiter—now running the offense, the Wolfpack have fully committed to building around him.

At RB, NC State got a breakout performance from Hollywood Smothers, who averaged an impressive 6.4 yards per carry despite the chaos around him.



CJ Bailey

Nicholas Faulkner / Icon Sportwire

The departure of WR Kevin Concepcion is significant, but the Wolfpack still return a capable group. Noah Rogers, and Wesley Grimes each bring starting experience and upside to the table. Justin Joly, who quietly led the team in receiving yards in 2024, is one of the best TEs in the entire country.

Up front, the offensive line struggled last season and needed attention. NC State turned to the transfer portal to bolster the group, and also expects freshman Spike Sowells to push for a starting job right away.

DEFENSE: For the first time in over half a decade, NC State will take the field without longtime defensive coordinator Tony Gibson, who left to become the head coach at Marshall. His replacement, D.J. Eliot, brings a wealth of experience and was most recently the LB coach for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Run defense was uncharacteristically weak in 2024, and rebuilding that strength will be a priority. DL Travali Price and Brandon Cleveland are expected to take on much bigger roles in Eliot's defensive front.

The LB room is in better shape, with veterans Sean Brown and Caden Fordham leading the way. Both bring the kind of toughness and consistency that this defense is built on.

In the secondary, NC State returns a group that combined for 10 interceptions last year. However, replacing All-ACC DB Aydan White and several other departed contributors won't be easy. Transfer safety JJ Johnson, a standout from the Sun Belt, is a major addition.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	East Carolina
Sept. 6	Virginia
Sept. 11	@ Wake Forest
Sept. 20	@ Duke
Sept. 27	Virginia Tech
Oct. 4	Campbell
Oct. 11	@ Notre Dame
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Pittsburgh
Nov. 1	Georgia Tech
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Miami (FL)
Nov. 21	Florida State
Nov. 29	North Carolina

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	71/100

OVERVIEW: The 2024 campaign was NC State's most disappointing season since 2019, even though the Wolfpack managed to secure a bowl game. After entering the year with lofty expectations, a string of injuries and inconsistencies left the program searching for answers.

Dave Doeren responded with sweeping changes on both sides of the ball—something he hasn't done since his debut season in Raleigh. The decision to elevate Kurt Roper reflects a clear investment in QB CJ Bailey and the future of the offense.

Defensively, Tony Gibson's departure stings, but it provides an opportunity to refresh a unit that underachieved last fall. With a new voice in D.J. Eliot and several experienced players still in the fold, there's hope for a bounce-back.

It's still the Doeren era in Raleigh—but as the Wolfpack enter 2025, it feels like the start of a brand new chapter.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (3-5)

NORTH CAROLINA TARHEELS

HEAD COACH: Bill Belichick
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Freddie Kitchens
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Stephen Belichick

RANK: 42



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Fenway Bowl

NORTH CAROLINA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1980

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 81st

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Kaimon Rucker,
RB Omarion Hampton, TE
Bryson Nesbit, OL Willie Lampkin,
OL John Copenhaver

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Gio Lopez,
WR Aziah Johnson, DL Smith
Vilbert, DL CJ Mims

OFFENSE: Bill Belichick's first hire in Chapel Hill was making Freddie Kitchens his offensive coordinator. It's a key indicator of Belichick's philosophy, which involves blending his style with some of the existing infrastructure at North Carolina.

There are plenty of options for this offense at QB, but the clear choice is South Alabama transfer Gio Lopez. When healthy, Lopez was one of the best signal callers in college football, and still has three years of eligibility remaining. Outside of that, Max Johnson is the most experienced QB and will provide a solid backup option.

The running game will be a key aspect of this offense, but it's going to take a lot to replace North Carolina legend Omarion Hampton.



Amare Campbell

Michael Koh / UNC Athletics

Davion Gause has the most production, but this staff is hoping Charelston French can make a big leap in his sophomore season.

Experience is lacking for the WRs on this team, and they'll need good play from some young players on this roster. Michigan State transfer Aziah Johnson is one of those players they're hoping can break out.

Willie Lampkin and John Copenhaver have left some big shoes to fill for this O-line. There is still plenty of experience between Aidan Banfield, Trevyon Green and Austin Blaske, which were all starters for a unit that was fourth in the ACC in rushing yards last season.

DEFENSE: While the offense will be a blend of the existing scheme and this new regime's vision, defensively things will be a lot more Belichick-esque. There are nine incoming defenders from the transfer portal, at least five of which are expected to start.

The D-line will feature a heavy dose of portal talent, including Smith Vilbert from Penn State and Pryce Yates, who secured 3.5 sacks at UConn in 2024.

This new staff couldn't resist retaining LB Amare Campbell, who racked up 6.5 sacks and 70+ tackles for the Tarheels last season. He is the most experienced of an exciting LB unit.

North Carolina's pass defense held their own at times during the 2024 campaign, and Will Hardy and Marcus Allen will return as seniors hoping for another solid season. The Tarheels also enlisted the services of Thaddeus Dixon

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Sept. 1	TCU
Sept. 6	@ Charlotte
Sept. 13	Richmond
Sept. 20	@ UCF
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Clemson
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 17	@ California
Oct. 25	Virginia
Oct. 31	@ Syracuse
Nov. 8	Stanford
Nov. 15	@ Wake Forest
Nov. 22	Duke
Nov. 29	@ NC State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	77/100

and Gavin Gibson to make for an all around veteran secondary.

OVERVIEW: There's a plethora of excitement surrounding Bill Belichick's first season at North Carolina. The all-time great's return to being a head coach has drawn a lot of attention.

There was a clear effort made to reflect this new staff's vision on the defense, and it could pay big dividends this season. Belichick has always been an excellent defensive mind, and should be able to get the most out of that side of the football.

However, there are some legitimate concerns for the offense. Freddie Kitchens is not an exceptionally seasoned play-caller, and his track record is a mixed bag.

Still, with one of the easier schedules in the ACC, North Carolina could quickly turn into one of the biggest stories in college football.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-3)



PITTSBURGH PANTHERS

HEAD COACH: Pat Narduzzi
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kade Bell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Randy Bates

RANK: 47

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the GameAbove Sports Bowl

PITTSBURGH AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 27th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Donovan Mc-
Millon, TE Gavin Bartholomew,
WR Konata Mumpfield, OL
Branson Taylor

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Keith
Gouveia, OL Kendall Stanley,
DL Blaine Spires, QB Mason
Heintschel, WR Tony Kinsler

OFFENSE: Hiring Kade Bell paid instant dividends and gave this offense a huge boost out of the gate in 2024. After averaging a scorching 40.6 points per game in their first seven matchups, the Panthers fell off hard down the stretch, averaging under 20 points per game in their final five games of the season.

The midseason collapse can largely be attributed to the injury suffered by QB Eli Holstein in the Virginia game, which severely limited what this offense could do. Holstein is back and expected to be fully healthy in 2025, but it remains unclear whether freshmen Julian Dugger or Mason Heintschel are ready to step in if needed.

Desmond Reid returns at RB after a productive junior year, but the depth behind him is a question. The Panthers will need to be more



Eli Holstein

Pittsburgh Athletics

consistent on the ground to avoid relying too heavily on Holstein and the passing game again this fall.

Replacing WR Konata Mumpfield and TE Gavin Bartholomew is a tall order, but there's optimism about the talent still on hand. TE Jake Overman brings experience and proven production, while WR Kenny Johnson looks poised for a major leap entering his sophomore season.

The offensive line surrendered 43 sacks last season and is an area in need of a bounce-back. Only two starters return, but transfers Kendall Stanley and Keith Gouveia have shown flashes of high upside. Pitt will need this unit to take a significant step forward if the offense hopes to stay on track for a full season.

DEFENSE: 2025 should bring more of the physical, opportunistic defense that has become Pitt's calling card under defensive coordinator Randy Bates.

The defensive line was one of the brightest spots in 2024, helping produce a top-tier ACC run defense and accounting for 20 of the team's 41 total sacks. The return of Jimmy Scott, Sean FitzSimmons and Nick James gives this unit a strong foundation once again.

At linebacker, Pitt brings back a productive and experienced trio in Braylan Lovelace, Kyle Louis and Rasheem Biles—all of whom recorded at least 50 tackles last season. This group will be the most dependable unit on the roster, and one of the best LB corps in the country.

The secondary was a weak point in 2024, and

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Duquesne
Sept. 6	Central Michigan
Sept. 13	@ West Virginia
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Louisville
Oct. 4	Boston College
Oct. 11	@ Florida State
Oct. 18	@ Syracuse
Oct. 25	NC State
Nov. 1	@ Stanford
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Notre Dame
Nov. 22	@ Georgia Tech
Nov. 29	Miami (FL)

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	76/100

losing All-ACC safety Donovan McMillon only raises more questions. Still, the emergence of young DB Cruce Brookins and some intriguing portal additions have given this staff reason to believe in a turnaround. Pitt's pass defense won't need to be elite, but it must improve.

OVERVIEW: Pitt bounced back in 2024 after a tough prior season, but the momentum was undercut by a six-game losing streak to close the year.

While Holstein's injury played a major role, it wasn't the only issue. The Panthers failed to produce a 100-yard rusher in seven games, and the offense became one-dimensional.

A second year under Bell should lead to more offensive consistency, and if the rebuilt secondary can progress, this could be a pivotal year in Pitt's climb back toward ACC contention. The foundation is in place—now it's about turning potential into results.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (4-4)

SMU MUSTANGS

HEAD COACH: Rhett Lashlee
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Casey Woods, Rob Likens
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scott Symons, Maurice Crum Jr.

RANK: 29



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-3 (8-0)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: 11th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost in the CFP First Round

SMU AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2023

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 78th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Brashard Smith, WR Moochie Dixon, OL Justin Osborne, DL Elijah Roberts, DB Cale Sanders Jr

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Daylon Singleton, OL Joshua Bates, OL Addison Nichols, LB Zakye Barker, RB Dramekco Green

OFFENSE: SMU fought through some early growing pains before ultimately finishing with the second-best scoring offense in the ACC last season. Replicating that success in 2025 won't be easy, as the Mustangs return just four offensive starters from that high-powered unit.

Quarterback Kevin Jennings established himself as one of the top passers in college football last fall and showcased plenty of ability as a runner as well. SMU also has one of the best backup situations in the country, with veteran Tyler Van Dyke behind Jennings—a player who could realistically start at a number of FBS programs.

The running back room was hit hard in the offseason. Brashard Smith, a 1,000-yard rusher, graduated, and projected 2025 starter LJ John-



Kevin Jennings

SMU Athletics

son entered the transfer portal in the spring. As a result, Camar Wheaton and Derrick McFall will be leaned on heavily.

The receiver group has undergone a full makeover and will rely heavily on two talented four-star freshmen—Daylon Singleton and Jalen Cooper—to keep the passing attack humming.

While the offensive line is experiencing some turnover, the foundation of what made the unit successful remains. Returning starters Logan Parr and PJ Williams bring experience, and Oklahoma transfer Joshua Bates is expected to slide in as a key piece at center.

DEFENSE: SMU's defense was quietly one of the most effective units in the ACC last season and played a crucial role in their run to both the conference title game and the College Football Playoff. However, the Mustangs lost the majority of their starters and will need to rebuild across the board.

The Mustangs clearly focused on retooling the trenches this offseason, adding six defensive linemen via the transfer portal. That group includes Kansas transfer and former four-star DJ Warner, Purdue's Jeffrey M'Ba, and veteran Texas State standout Terry Webb—all of whom should be in the mix to start.

Linebacker play could be a strength once again, especially with the addition of Zakye Barker from the portal. He'll join a solid group led by Alexander Kilgore, who recorded over 50 tackles in 2024.

Despite the overall defensive turnover, the

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	East Texas A&M
Sept. 6	Baylor
Sept. 13	@ Missouri State
Sept. 20	@ TCU
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Syracuse
Oct. 11	Stanford
Oct. 18	@ Clemson
Oct. 25	@ Wake Forest
Nov. 1	Miami (FL)
Nov. 8	@ Boston College
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	Louisville
Nov. 29	@ California

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	84/100

secondary still looks like a strength. First-team All-ACC safety Isaiah Nwokobia returns to the group, and fellow safety Ahmaad Moses brings big-play ability that could help solidify the unit.

OVERVIEW: SMU made a statement in its return to the power conference ranks last season, taking full advantage of a manageable ACC debut schedule and savvy portal additions to reach the CFP.

While the schedule in 2025 is expected to be slightly more difficult, it's still quite comparable to what SMU faced a year ago. The biggest question marks come at the offensive skill positions, where youth could lead to inconsistency, and in the trenches where new portal additions must gel.

Recapturing the magic of 2024 won't be easy, but SMU has the coaching and key returning players to make another run—especially if their new faces settle in quickly.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-3)



STANFORD CARDINAL

HEAD COACH: Frank Reich
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nate Byham
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bobby April, Andy Thompson

RANK: 83

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 16th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

STANFORD AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2015

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 83rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL David Bailey,
OL Connor McLaughlin, WR Em-
mett Mosley, OL Luke Baklen-
ko, OL Jake Maikkula, WR Elic
Ayomanor

KEY ADDITIONS: WR CJ Wil-
liams, DB Jordan Washington,
OL Niki Prongos

OFFENSE: The Stanford offense has nowhere to go but up after a brutal 2024, and with re-spected offensive mind Frank Reich stepping in as interim head coach, there's some optimism for progress in 2025.

Former four-star QB Elijah Brown was the pre-sumed starter following limited action as a true freshman, but the late spring addition of UCF transfer Dylan Rizk means the competition is now wide open.

Last season's rushing attack was one of the worst in the country, and while the Cardinal returns their top three rushers, that group combined for under 700 yards. There's not much reason to believe this area will improve significantly unless someone takes a major leap forward in 2025.



Jack Leyrer

Stanford Athletics

Receiver might be the lone bright spot offensively heading into 2025. Yale transfer David Pantelis arrives after a 900-yard, 8-touchdown season, and is one of four portal additions at the position. Tight end Sam Roush also returns as a reliable weapon in a system that has tradi-tionally leaned on TEs in the passing game.

The offensive line has three returning starters in Khalil House, Jack Leyrer, and Simone Pale, but the unit still has plenty of question marks. The loss of Jake Maikkula and some key depth pieces will require unproven players to step up if Stanford hopes to find stability up front.

DEFENSE: The defense enters 2025 in slightly better shape than the offense, thanks in part to continuity—Bobby April was retained as defen-sive coordinator. But make no mistake, this side of the ball also needs significant improvement.

The defensive line brings back its anchor in nose tackle Braden Marceau-Olayinka, and there's optimism surrounding the growth of Zach Rowell and Anthony Franklin. Depth here looks fairly solid compared to other position groups.

Linebacker is the clear strength of this team. Even with the departures of Tristan Sinclair and Gaethan Bernadel, both Matt Rose and Tevarua Tafiti return to lead a unit that was a bright spot in last season's otherwise rough campaign, and they could be just that again this year.

The secondary was a major liability, ranking dead last in the ACC in passing yards allowed. Mitch Leigber and Collin Wright return as start-ers, but this group needs drastic improvement.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	@ Hawaii
Aug. 30	BYE
Sept. 6	@ BYU
Sept. 13	Boston College
Sept. 20	@ Virginia
Sept. 27	San Jose State
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ SMU
Oct. 18	Florida State
Oct. 25	@ Miami (FL)
Nov. 1	Pittsburgh
Nov. 8	@ North Carolina
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	California
Nov. 29	Notre Dame

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	64/100

There's hope that younger players like Cam Richardson and Darrius Davis—both standouts in spring practice—can help elevate the unit.

OVERVIEW: Stanford's decision to fire head coach Troy Taylor in late March was surprising and puts the program in a difficult spot heading into the season. Frank Reich steps in on an interim basis, but the lack of a long-term vision could create further instability.

A coaching change that late in the cycle often brings disruption, and unfortunately, there's little evidence to suggest a significant on-field improvement in 2025. Reich brings strong credentials as an offensive mind, but it's worth noting Taylor came in with a similar reputation and couldn't find much success.

The best-case scenario for the Cardinal is a season marked by improved effort, some flash-es of individual progress, and a clearer idea of who should lead the program long term.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (1-7)

SYRACUSE ORANGE

HEAD COACH: Fran Brown
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Nixon, Mike Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Elijah Robinson, Robert Wright

RANK: 60



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: 20th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Holiday Bowl

SYRACUSE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2012

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 90th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Kyle McCord,
TE Oronde Gadsden II, DL Fadil
Diggs, DB Alijah Clark, LB Justin
Barron, WR Trebor Pena

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Rickie
Collins, OL Naquail Bertrand, DL
David Reese, DB Demetres
Samuel Jr., QB Steve Angeli

OFFENSE: Syracuse enjoyed a breakout offensive season in 2024 under first-year co-offensive coordinators Jeff Nixon and Mike Johnson, but now face the challenge of replacing many of the playmakers that made them successful.

Former four-star LSU transfer Rickie Collins and Notre Dame transfer Steve Angeli will battle it out for the starting QB position. Collins was named the starter in the spring, but that was before Angeli entered the picture. A wealth of QB options will be a luxury for Syracuse this year.

The departure of LeQuint Allen leaves a major hole in the backfield. Syracuse will now look to Yasin Willis and Will Nixon to carry the load. Both backs are relatively unproven, but one will need to emerge as a reliable option to keep defenses honest and support Collins in the



Duce Chestnut

Joe Zhao / Video Editor

passing game.

The WR corps is also undergoing a reset, with the team's top three pass-catchers departing in the offseason. Darrell Gill Jr. returns as the most productive option, while Georgia transfer Zeed Haynes is expected to play a bigger role. Former four-star sophomore Jamie Tremble has the tools to become a key contributor.

The O-line, however, offers some stability. Veteran tackle Mark Petry returns after exercising his extra year of JUCO eligibility, and experienced starters Joe Cruz and Da'Metrius Weatherspoon will help anchor the group. This unit should provide a solid foundation for a developing offense.

DEFENSE: There's plenty of work to be done on the defensive side of the ball, where co-coordinators Elijah Robinson and Robert Wright are tasked with raising the unit's level of play after an inconsistent 2024 campaign.

Up front, defensive end Denis Jaquez Jr. will be asked to help fill the void left by Fadil Diggs, who is off to the NFL. There's also optimism around sophomore Maraad Watson following a promising freshman season, and former four-star King Joseph Edwards is a player Syracuse hopes will make a greater impact this fall.

The linebacker corps was hit hard by departures, losing more production than perhaps any other position group. Derek McDonald is the most experienced returner, and senior Anwar Sparrow will be looked to for leadership.

The secondary showed flashes of potential in

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Tennessee
Sept. 6	UConn
Sept. 12	Colgate
Sept. 20	@ Clemson
Sept. 27	Duke
Oct. 4	@ SMU
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	Pittsburgh
Oct. 25	@ Georgia Tech
Oct. 31	North Carolina
Nov. 8	@ Miami (FL)
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	@ Notre Dame
Nov. 29	Boston College

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	70/100

2024 and could take another step forward this season. Veterans Duce Chestnut and Devin Grant return to lead the group, but three starters need to be replaced. Freshman Demetres Samuel Jr. is one of the younger players expected to be part of the solution.

OVERVIEW: Fran Brown's impact on Syracuse football has already been felt through improved recruiting, energized fan support, and renewed investment from boosters. The Orange capitalized on that momentum in 2024, earning their first 10-win season since 2018.

2025 could bring some growing pains, Syracuse faces the toughest schedule in the ACC and will rely heavily on young, inexperienced players across the roster.

The future looks bright in Central New York, but this season may serve as a transitional step—laying the groundwork for even greater success to come.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-4)



VIRGINIA CAVALIERS

HEAD COACH: Tony Elliott
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Desmond Kitchings
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Rudzinski

RANK: 64

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 13th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

VIRGINIA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1995

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 46th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Jonas Sanker,
QB Anthony Colandrea, DL Chico
Bennett Jr., WR Chris Tyree,
RB Kobe Pace

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jahmal
Edrine, OL Brady Wilson, QB
Chandler Morris, DL Cazeem
Moore, DB Devin Neal

OFFENSE: Desmond Kitchings enters his fourth season as Virginia's offensive coordinator under head coach Tony Elliott, and 2025 could be a pivotal year for the offense. After significant struggles in 2024, the Cavaliers flushed much of what wasn't working and looked to the transfer portal for new playmakers and answers.

Chandler Morris is the clear-cut starter at quarterback. Morris, who began his career at Oklahoma and TCU, had his best season last year at North Texas, throwing for 31 touchdowns and nearly 4,000 yards. He'll have a talented backup in sophomore transfer Daniel Kaelin, providing solid depth at the position.

At running back, Xavier Brown is trusted with the starting role after splitting time last season and showing promise. Virginia also added



Xavier Brown

Matt Newton / Sports Illustrated

depth with NC Central transfer J'Mari Taylor, who rushed for over 1,000 yards in 2024, giving the Cavaliers a more reliable and deeper backfield than last year.

The WR group was inconsistent in 2024, leading to a concerted effort to find new weapons. Transfers Jahmal Edrine and Jayden Thomas bring limited production but high upside, while Virginia is excited about what hometown talent Kameron Courtney can do in a starting role. The tight end position remains a question mark, with potential emerging from within the program.

On the offensive line, Virginia returns three starters and adds four transfers. The line was solid in pass protection last season and had a decent run game, so there's considerable upside for this veteran and revamped group to anchor the offense.

DEFENSE: John Rudzinski's defense took a modest step forward in 2024, improving from the ACC's worst defense to something closer to average. Returning a decent core of players and adding key transfers, the Cavaliers could continue progressing on this side of the ball.

Defensive lineman Cazeem Moore, a standout transfer from Elon who recorded six sacks and three forced fumbles last year, joins returning anchors Jahmeer Carter and Jason Hammond to bolster the run defense and pass rush.

The linebacker corps, which lost some production from last season, still returns its top three tacklers and adds four-star Ohio State transfer Mitchell Melton, whose talent could be a game-changer and a potential superstar.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Coastal Carolina
Sept. 6	@ NC State
Sept. 13	William & Mary
Sept. 20	Stanford
Sept. 26	Florida State
Oct. 4	@ Louisville
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	Washington State
Oct. 25	@ North Carolina
Nov. 1	@ California
Nov. 8	Wake Forest
Nov. 15	@ Duke
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 29	Virginia Tech

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	70/100

Virginia's secondary lagged behind the front seven last year. The arrival of transfers Ja'Son Prevard and Devin Neal should help shore up the back end, but the group overall is young and inexperienced, meaning significant development will be necessary.

OVERVIEW: Tony Elliott's fourth year as head coach is shaping up to be a measuring stick for his tenure. He has maintained consistency in his coaching staff and approach, emphasizing gradual growth rather than wholesale change each year.

With an exciting new quarterback leading the offense, solid additions through the transfer portal, and a veteran offensive line, Virginia is poised to rebound and compete for a bowl appearance in 2025. Success will depend on continued defensive improvement and the ability of new skill players to step into bigger roles, but the pieces are there for a meaningful step forward.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (3-5)

VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES

HEAD COACH: Brent Pry
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Philip Montgomery
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sam Siefkes

RANK: 46



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost in
Duke's Mayo Bowl

VIRGINIA TECH AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2010

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 77th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Bhayshul
Tuten, WR Ali Jennings, WR
Jaylin Lane, DB Dorian Strong,
DL Antwaun Powell-Ryland

KEY ADDITIONS: DB Isaiah
Cash, RB Terion Stewart, WR
Donavon Greene

OFFENSE: Virginia Tech's offense was one of the most disappointing in the country in 2024, failing to meet lofty preseason expectations and finishing in the bottom half of the ACC in total yards. After offensive coordinator Tyler Bowen left for Ohio State, the Hokies hired former Tulsa head coach Philip Montgomery to lead the offense in 2025.

QB Kyron Drones battled injuries and inconsistency during his junior season, but Virginia Tech is hopeful he can return to the form he showed as a sophomore, when he played like an All-Conference caliber signal caller.

Replacing the production of Bhayshul Tuten will require a group effort, but the Hokies made significant additions through the transfer portal. They added three running backs who each



Quentin Reddish

Virginia Tech Athletics

ran for over 700 yards last season, highlighted by first-team All-MAC RB Terrion Stewart and Marcellous Hawkins, who rushed for over 1,000 yards and 18 touchdowns at Division II Central Missouri State.

The receiving corps returns only two productive pass catchers in Ayden Greene and TE Benji Gosnell, but the Hokies brought in an exciting duo from the portal in former four-star Cameron Seldon and Wake Forest standout Donavon Greene.

Virginia Tech's offensive line projects to start three transfers this season. The crown jewel of this group is redshirt freshman Kyle Altuner, who will start at center. Returning starters Layth Ghannam and Bob Schick provide some continuity for a unit that struggled to protect the quarterback at times in 2024.

DEFENSE: Brent Pry made the decision to fire defensive coordinator Chris Marve after a disappointing season and brought in Sam Siefkes, an unconventional hire who spent the last four years as an NFL position coach.

Charged with replacing several household names, Virginia Tech added coveted portal prospects Ben Bell from Texas State and FCS standout Arias Nash from Mercer to bolster the defensive line.

The linebacker group returns solid production in Caleb Woodson and Jaden Keller, and adds depth with an excellent developmental player in Jordan Bass, a transfer from Pitt.

Virginia Tech's strong 2024 secondary will need

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 31	South Carolina
Sept. 6	Vanderbilt
Sept. 13	Old Dominion
Sept. 20	Wofford
Sept. 27	@ NC State
Oct. 4	Wake Forest
Oct. 11	@ Georgia Tech
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 24	California
Nov. 1	Louisville
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Florida State
Nov. 22	Miami (FL)
Nov. 29	@ Virginia

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	76/100

some work to maintain that level. Budding star Quentin Reddish remains a key piece, with Dante Lovett expected to play a major role as well.

OVERVIEW: After high expectations for 2024, Virginia Tech's season fell short due to defensive inconsistency and an underwhelming offense, culminating in a sub-.500 finish.

Brent Pry has brought in two new coordinators in hopes of turning the program around quickly. It won't be easy, especially with the loss of numerous key contributors, including several now playing in the NFL.

The silver lining lies in a strong transfer portal haul and stability at quarterback with Kyron Drones. If Philip Montgomery can provide the offensive boost the team needs and Sam Siefkes can effectively implement Pry's defensive vision, Virginia Tech's fortunes could change rapidly in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (4-4)



WAKE FOREST DEMON DEACONS

HEAD COACH: Jake Dickert
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rob Ezell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scottie Hazelton

RANK: 79

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 15th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

WAKE FOREST AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: ACC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2006

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 88th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Branson
Combs, DL Jasheen Davis, WR
Taylor Morin, QB Hank Bach-
meier

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Carlos
Hernandez, QB Robby Ashford,
OL Fa'alili Fa'amoe, DB Karon
Prunty, DL Jayden Loving

OFFENSE: Wake Forest's offense will be reshaped under new offensive coordinator Rob Ezell, who guided a highly effective attack at South Alabama last season. Ezell's scheme favors a dynamic, balanced approach that suits versatile playmakers.

South Carolina transfer Robby Ashford is expected to start at quarterback for the Demon Deacons in 2025. Ashford's dual-threat ability fits perfectly with Ezell's vision, and he showed flashes of brilliance in his limited action last year, including a strong start against Akron.

The backfield remains anchored by RB Demond Claiborne, who surprised many by choosing to stay despite the coaching change. Claiborne, along with second-leading rusher Tate Carney, provides a reliable and expe-



Demond Claiborne

Wake Forest Athletics

rienced ground game to complement the passing attack.

Wide receiver is where the biggest turnover occurred. Carlos Hernandez followed new head coach Jake Dickert from Washington State and figures to be a featured target. Wake Forest also added Division II standout Reginald Vick Jr. and FCS receiver Sawyer Racanelli to bolster the receiving corps. The tight end position is likely to be led by returning junior Michael Frogge, who showed promise despite limited production last season.

Wake Forest's offensive line is almost entirely made up of transfers, with Fa'alili Fa'amoe, Devin Kylany, and AJ Hasson all arriving from Washington State. This unit may be new to the program but brings experience and cohesion that could pay dividends early.

DEFENSE: Scottie Hazelton joins Wake Forest as defensive coordinator under Jake Dickert, bringing decades of coaching experience dating back to 1996. His defensive philosophy emphasizes quarterback pressure, a focus reflected in the team's transfer portal activity.

Colorado State transfer Gabe Kirschke, who recorded 6.5 sacks last season, and Idaho's Dallas Alfalva, with 5 sacks, are expected to be key pass rushers in Hazelton's scheme.

The linebacker corps remains anchored by Quincy Bryant and Dylan Hazen, who provide stability and experience, making this a strength for Wake Forest's defense.

The secondary returns All-ACC safety Nick

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Kennesaw State
Sept. 6	Western Carolina
Sept. 11	NC State
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Georgia Tech
Oct. 4	@ Virginia Tech
Oct. 11	@ Oregon State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	SMU
Nov. 1	@ Florida State
Nov. 8	@ Virginia
Nov. 15	North Carolina
Nov. 22	Delaware
Nov. 29	@ Duke

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	64/100

Andersen, a standout playmaker, along with effective pass defender Karon Prunty from NC A&T. With this group, Wake Forest looks poised to improve on its lackluster pass defense.

OVERVIEW: Jake Dickert's move from Pullman, Washington to Winston-Salem signals the beginning of a challenging rebuild for Wake Forest. Dave Clawson's 11-season tenure left a program with many established pieces, making wholesale changes difficult.

Heading into 2025, the team benefits from a few key positives, including Claiborne's return and several defensive contributors who bring experience and leadership.

However, the roster's overall foundation remains shaky, with depth concerns across nearly every position group. Fortunately, Wake Forest's 2025 schedule is favorable enough that competing for a bowl game isn't out of reach for this team in transition.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (1-7)

BUDGE'S UNIT RANKINGS

FOR THE 2025 SEASON

QUARTERBACKS

1. LSU
2. CLEMSON
3. SOUTH CAROLINA
4. ARIZONA STATE
5. PENN STATE
6. TEXAS
7. OHIO STATE
8. SMU
9. BAYLOR
10. OKLAHOMA

RUNNING BACKS

1. PENN STATE
2. NOTRE DAME
3. LOUISVILLE
4. MINNESOTA
5. TEXAS A&M
6. OREGON
7. GEORGIA TECH
8. TEXAS
9. MICHIGAN
10. WASHINGTON

WIDE RECEIVERS

1. OHIO STATE
2. AUBURN
3. CLEMSON
4. ALABAMA
5. LSU
6. ARIZONA STATE
7. OREGON
8. INDIANA
9. TEXAS TECH
10. PENN STATE

TIGHT ENDS

1. TEXAS
2. VANDERBILT
3. NC STATE
4. WISCONSIN
5. OHIO STATE
6. GEORGIA
7. MICHIGAN STATE
8. OREGON STATE
9. OLE MISS
10. OREGON



Kadyn Proctor

Kennington Smith III / The NY Times

OFFENSIVE LINES

1. ALABAMA
2. FLORIDA
3. NOTRE DAME
4. TEXAS A&M
5. UTAH
6. IOWA
7. OREGON
8. MIAMI
9. CLEMSON
10. PENN STATE

HEAD COACHES

1. KIRBY SMART, GEORGIA
2. RYAN DAY, OHIO STATE
3. KALEN DEBOER, BAMA
4. STEVE SARKISIAN, TEX
5. DABO SWINNEY, CLEM
6. MATT CAMPBELL, ISU
7. CHRIS KLIEMAN, KSU
8. DAN LANNING, OREGON
9. JAMES FRANKLIN, PSU
10. CURT CIGNETTI, IND
11. KENNY DILLINGHAM, ASU
12. JOSH HEUPEL, TENN
13. JEFF BROHM, UL
14. LANE KIFFIN, OLE MISS
15. JON SUMRALL, TULANE

DEFENSIVE LINES

1. CLEMSON
2. PENN STATE
3. ALABAMA
4. TEXAS TECH
5. MICHIGAN
6. GEORGIA
7. MIAMI
8. FLORIDA
9. OKLAHOMA
10. SOUTH CAROLINA

LINEBACKERS

1. LSU
2. TEXAS
3. OHIO STATE
4. PITTSBURGH
5. KANSAS STATE
6. CLEMSON
7. NOTRE DAME
8. TEXAS A&M
9. GEORGIA
10. BYU

SECONDARIES

1. OHIO STATE
2. GEORGIA
3. MINNESOTA
4. ALABAMA
5. LSU
6. WASHINGTON
7. OKLAHOMA
8. DUKE
9. TEXAS
10. NOTRE DAME

SPECIAL TEAMS

1. GEORGIA
2. TEXAS A&M
3. MIAMI
4. USC
5. IOWA
6. MICHIGAN
7. GEORGIA TECH
8. KANSAS
9. BAYLOR
10. DUKE

BIG TEN CONFERENCE 2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. OREGON	13-1 (9-0)
2. PENN STATE	13-3 (8-1)
3. INDIANA	11-2 (8-1)
4. OHIO STATE	14-2 (7-2)
5. ILLINOIS	10-3 (6-3)
6. IOWA	8-5 (6-3)
7. MICHIGAN	8-5 (5-4)
8. MINNESOTA	8-5 (5-4)
9. RUTGERS	7-6 (4-5)
10. USC	7-6 (4-5)
11. WASHINGTON	6-7 (4-5)
12. MICHIGAN ST.	5-7 (3-6)
13. NEBRASKA	7-6 (3-6)
14. UCLA	5-7 (3-6)
15. WISCONSIN	5-7 (3-6)
16. NORTHWESTERN	4-8 (2-7)
17. MARYLAND	4-8 (1-8)
18. PURDUE	1-11 (0-9)

Postseason results aside, **Oregon** dazzled in their inaugural Big Ten campaign, making history as the first team to defeat Ohio State, Penn State, Michigan, and Michigan State all in one season.

Penn State's 2024 season was more of the same familiar pattern: dominating lesser opponents but falling just short against the conference's elite.

Curt Cignetti's remarkable first-year turnaround at **Indiana** was the biggest surprise of the year. The Hoosiers capitalized on a favorable schedule and momentum, crafting one of the best seasons in program history.

Ohio State's regular season was underwhelming by their lofty standards. However, the introduction of a new postseason format gave the Buckeyes a second chance to redeem themselves, culminating in their first national championship since 2014.

Illinois surged in Brett Bielema's fourth year, surviving several nail-biters to achieve their first double-digit win season since 2001. A key driver of this breakthrough was the emergence of Barry Lunney Jr.'s offense.

Iowa continued to be a model of consistency in 2024. The Hawkeyes' offense, under Tim Lester, saw modest progress, leaving fans hopeful for further growth heading into 2025.

Michigan struggled with inconsistency all year but pulled off a stunning upset against their archrivals in the season finale. That victory shift-



Dariel Djabome

Rutgers Athletics

ed the narrative around the Wolverines' season.

Minnesota, led by P.J. Fleck, quietly emerged as one of the hottest teams late in the season, flying under the radar but finishing strong in the conference race.

Rutgers used a strong start and an impressive finish in Big Ten play to earn their second consecutive bowl appearance. Greg Schiano's culture-driven program continues to build steadily toward sustained success.

USC endured a disappointing season marked by offensive struggles. Still, their defense showed signs of improvement, providing hope for a more balanced team in the future.

Washington's first Big Ten season was tumultuous but ultimately ended with a bowl game appearance—a positive outcome given the challenges faced throughout the year.

Jonathan Smith's debut season at **Michigan State** generated excitement but also revealed that the Spartans have significant work ahead before returning to winning ways.

Nebraska finally broke their long-standing bowl drought in 2024, but lingering issues, especially in November, kept the Cornhuskers from fully capitalizing on their potential.

UCLA stumbled out of the gate with an 0-4 conference start but rallied impressively to finish strong, with a 3 game winning streak late.

Wisconsin suffered a nightmare season, watching their remarkable 22-year bowl streak

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 28	NEB vs CINCY
Aug. 30	NWSTRN @ TU
Aug. 30	TEX @ OSU
Aug. 30	UTAH @ UCLA
Sept. 6	ILL @ DUKE
Sept. 6	IOWA @ ISU
Sept. 6	MICH @ OU
Sept. 6	BC @ MSU
Sept. 6	OK STATE @ UO
Sept. 6	UCLA @ UNLV
Sept. 13	MINN @ CAL
Sept. 13	WISC @ BAMA
Sept. 20	ORST @ UO
Sept. 20	UW @ WAZZU
Oct. 18	USC @ ND

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

BRET BIELEMA, ILL	A
CURT CIGNETTI, IU	A+
KIRK FERENTZ, IOWA	B
MIKE LOCKSLEY, MD	D+
JONATHAN SMITH, MSU	C
SHERRONE MOORE, MICH	B+
PJ FLECK, MINN	B+
MATT RHULE, NEB	B-
DAVID BRAUN, NWSTRN	C+
RYAN DAY, OSU	A+
DAN LANNING, UO	A
JAMES FRANKLIN, PSU	A
RYAN WALTERS, PUR	F
GREG SCHIANO, RU	B+
DESHAUN FOSTER, UCLA	C
LINCOLN RILEY, USC	C-
JEDD FISCH, UW	C+
LUKE FICKELL, WISC	D-

come to an end in Luke Fickell's second year.

Northwestern hovered near the bottom of the standings and has clear room for improvement under new coach David Braun, who will look to turn things around in the coming years.

Maryland, typically sound and steady, took a step backward in 2024 and faces a crucial offseason to reassess and adjust its approach moving forward.

At the bottom of the heap was **Purdue**, which had the worst power-conference season in 2024 and were blown out frequently.

BIG TEN CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Makhi Hughes, OREGON

OPOY: Jeremiah Smith, OHIO STATE

DPOY: Dani Dennis-Sutton, PENN STATE

COACH OF THE YEAR: Jedd Fisch, WASHINGTON

1. PENN STATE The Nittany Lions return nearly every key difference-maker from last year's offense and added some major pieces through the portal. If Jim Knowles can work his magic on the defense, Penn State might be partying like it's 1986.

2. OHIO STATE The defending national champions still boast one of the most talented rosters in the country but enter 2025 with plenty of unknowns. A new staff, a new QB, and a largely unproven roster leave several key questions to be answered.

3. OREGON The Ducks will once again field a talented roster, but they'll rely on far less proven production than in years past. Fortunately, staff continuity and a proven system provide a strong foundation for the season.

4. USC The Trojans' drastic defensive improvement last season went largely unnoticed amid a down year. With the offense expected to return to form, USC could emerge as one of the biggest turnaround stories of 2025.

5. INDIANA The 2025 season should prove that last year wasn't just lightning in a bottle for the Hoosiers. After landing another impressive transfer class, Indiana has earned trust in its portal evaluations and will be a Big Ten title contender.

6. WASHINGTON A rising group of talented players in Seattle has the potential to deliver big results in Jedd Fisch's second season. Their high-level talent and strong transfer portal class make them a serious threat in the Big Ten.

7. MICHIGAN Sherrone Moore made the necessary adjustments this offseason to fix what was a disaster on offense. The Wolverines may have what it takes to return to Big Ten contention.

8. MINNESOTA The Golden Gophers will have a chance to build off their strong finish to the 2024 season with a solid group of returning



Fernando Mendoza

Rich Janzaruk / Herald Times

players. Minnesota has a favorable early schedule that could allow them to get off to a hot start.

9. ILLINOIS The Fighting Illini are a trendy pick this offseason after last year's success and the return of 17 starters. They will need to shore up some areas that nearly cost them close games during their 2024 campaign.

10. RUTGERS The Scarlet Knights might be the most underrated team in the Big Ten heading into 2025. They bring back many key contributors from a solid passing attack and have a defense capable of competing with anyone.

11. MICHIGAN STATE Year two under Jonathan Smith should be a compelling storyline. Michigan State is further along on defense than most realize, and could help them make noise.

12. NEBRASKA Year three is typically when Matt Rhule teams take a big step, and many believe that could be the case for Nebraska. But the offseason didn't go as planned, and the departure of Tony White will be a setback.

13. IOWA The most consistent program in the conference is expected to be back in a familiar spot again this fall. Iowa did show a few cracks defensively last season that they'll look to patch.

14. WISCONSIN There's a sense of urgency for Luke Fickell this year. Following a disappointing 2024, Fickell retooled his coaching staff and made key adjustments to get back to winning.

15. UCLA The 2025 season will be a proving ground for DeShaun Foster's roster management and staff decisions. Amid a backdrop of

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 27	IU @ IOWA
Sept. 27	USC @ ILL
Oct. 11	OSU @ ILL
Oct. 11	IU @ UO
Oct. 11	MICH @ USC
Oct. 18	PSU @ IOWA
Oct. 18	UW @ MICH
Oct. 25	MICH @ MSU
Nov. 1	USC @ NEB
Nov. 1	PSU @ OSU
Nov. 8	IU @ PSU
Nov. 22	USC @ UO
Nov. 28	IOWA @ NEB
Nov. 29	OSU @ MICH
Nov. 29	UO @ UW

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (4)	OHIO STATE
2. (5)	OREGON
3. (6)	MICHIGAN
4. (13)	USC
5. (15)	PENN STATE
6. (22)	NEBRASKA
7. (23)	WASHINGTON
8. (25)	MARYLAND
9. (27)	WISCONSIN
10. (33)	RUTGERS
11. (39)	IOWA
12. (45)	ILLINOIS
13. (46)	UCLA
14. (47)	INDIANA
15. (49)	MINNESOTA
16. (57)	MICHIGAN STATE
17. (66)	NORTHWESTERN
18. (91)	PURDUE

uncertainty, the Bruins will try to stabilize things.

16. NORTHWESTERN The Wildcats still face a significant talent gap in Big Ten play, but did add some intriguing pieces through the portal.

17. MARYLAND Mike Locksley opted for a soft reset with both his coaching staff and roster. He's hoping that his approach will breathe new life into the program.

18. PURDUE Barry Odom approached the rebuild at Purdue with a complete reset for 2025, completely overhauling this roster.



ILLINOIS FIGHTING ILLINI

HEAD COACH: Bret Bielema
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Barry Lunney Jr.
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Aaron Henry, Terrance Jamison

RANK: 32

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (6-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: 16th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the
Citrus Bowl

ILLINOIS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2001

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 3rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 9
offensive, 8 defensive

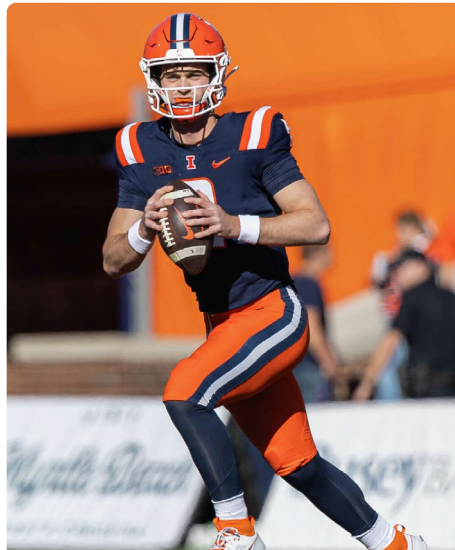
KEY LOSSES: WR Pat Bryant,
DL TeRah Edwards, DL Dennis
Briggs Jr., LB Seth Coleman

KEY ADDITIONS: DL James
Thompson Jr., LB Leon Low-
ery Jr., WR Hudson Clement,
WR Justin Bowick, OL Ayden
Knapik, QB Ethan Hampton

OFFENSE: Barry Lunney Jr.'s system has truly hit its stride the last two seasons, giving Illinois one of the clearest offensive identities in the Big Ten. With 2025 on the horizon, the Fighting Illini have a major opportunity to elevate their success even further.

Luke Altmeyer took a significant step forward in 2024, quickly emerging as one of the Big Ten's most efficient passers. The addition of Northern Illinois transfer Ethan Hampton gives the Illini a reliable backup behind him.

Illinois embraced a committee approach in the run game last season—and that entire committee is back. The trio of Josh McCray, Aidan Laughery, and Kaden Feagin returns to form one of the deepest and most versatile backfields in the country.



Luke Altmeyer

Icon Sportswire / Getty Images

The loss of Illinois' top two receivers from last season creates a big opportunity for new play-makers. West Virginia transfer Hudson Clement brings explosive ability and is expected to be a focal point in the passing game. Key returners like Collin Dixon and TE Tanner Arkin will also play crucial roles.

The offensive line returns fully intact after a steady 2024 campaign. While they struggled with pass protection and weren't always dominant in the run game, continuity and experience should lead to noticeable improvements.

DEFENSE: Despite showing up in marquee matchups, Illinois' defense had its share of costly breakdowns that nearly derailed their 2024 season. If the Illini hope to match or exceed last year's success, those inconsistencies must be cleaned up.

The defensive line looks strong with the return of Alex Bray and Jeremiah Warren, plus the additions of Wisconsin transfers James Thompson Jr. and Curt Neal—both of whom bring disruptive ability up front.

The linebacker corps returns its top tacklers in James Kreutz and Dylan Rosiek, while also adding Wisconsin transfer Leon Lowery Jr., who brings leadership and experience to the room.

The secondary should be a strength, led by All-Big Ten DB Xavier Scott. The entire starting unit returns after finishing fifth in the Big Ten with 12 interceptions in 2024. Their ability to take the ball away will once again be a key asset.

OVERVIEW: Illinois enters 2025 with the

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Western Illinois
Sept. 6	@ Duke
Sept. 13	Western Michigan
Sept. 20	@ Indiana
Sept. 27	USC
Oct. 4	@ Purdue
Oct. 11	Ohio State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Washington
Nov. 1	Rutgers
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Maryland
Nov. 22	@ Wisconsin
Nov. 29	Northwestern

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	82/100

most buzz the program has seen in over two decades. Coming off their best season since the 2001 Big Ten title run, the Illini rank top-10 nationally in returning production and bring back 18 starters.

They also aced the offseason by making targeted, high-impact portal additions, while keeping their coaching staff intact—factors that add stability and continuity to an already promising roster.

That said, there's still work to be done. The offense struggled at times through the air, and the defense nearly gave away multiple games to overmatched opponents. Five of Illinois' 10 wins came by just one score, including two that required overtime.

Still, the Illini have the pieces in place for a special season. The key will be tightening up in key moments and maintaining focus in an increasingly competitive Big Ten.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)

INDIANA HOOSIERS

HEAD COACH: Curt Cignetti
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Shanahan, Chandler Whitmer
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bryant Haines

RANK: 16



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-2 (8-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: 10th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost in the CFP First Round

INDIANA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1967

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 44th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3 offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Kurtis Rourke, WR Donaven McCulley, WR Myles Price, RB Justice Ellison, DL CJ West, LB Jailin Walker

KEY ADDITIONS: DB Louis Moore, DL Dominique Ratcliff, WR Makai Jackson, OL Pat Coogan, QB Fernando Mendoza

OFFENSE: Indiana produced one of the Big Ten's most explosive offenses in 2024 despite a wave of new faces. For the Hoosiers to replicate that success in 2025, they'll once again need key newcomers to step up—though this time around, there are a few more familiar faces to lean on.

The biggest name among the new arrivals is QB Fernando Mendoza, a transfer from Cal who showed flashes of potential despite inconsistent protection with the Golden Bears. If Mendoza can manage Mike Shanahan's offense with even a fraction of the command Kurtis Rourke had last year, Indiana's offense should remain dangerous.

The backfield was also hit hard by departures, but Indiana reloaded with two proven backs:



Elijah Sarratt

247 Sports

Roman Hemby from Maryland and Lee Beebe Jr. from UAB. Both have been productive at the FBS level and will be counted on to carry a major workload.

All-Big Ten WR Elijah Sarratt, who followed Curt Cignetti from James Madison, headlines a strong receiver group. Indiana also brings back its second-leading receiver from 2024, Omar Cooper, and supplemented the room with a few key portal additions, giving them solid depth at the position.

Indiana's O-line was a major strength last season but now returns just two starters: Bray Lynch and Carter Smith. The Hoosiers did land a quality transfer in center Pat Coogan, but overall depth and experience are thinner than last year.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Bryant Haines orchestrated a remarkable turnaround in 2024, taking Indiana's defense from near the bottom of the Big Ten to one of its most dominant. Repeating that feat in 2025 will be a challenge after losing several key contributors to graduation and the NFL Draft.

The Hoosiers allowed just 80 rushing yards per game last season—a testament to their dominance in the trenches. Tyrique Tucker returns as a disruptive force up front and will be joined by some big-time portal additions.

LB is one of the team's biggest strengths. Aiden Fisher is back to anchor the group, and he'll be flanked by rising sophomore Rolijah Hardy and talented freshman Quentin Clark, giving Indiana an athletic and underrated unit.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Old Dominion
Sept. 6	Kennesaw State
Sept. 12	Indiana State
Sept. 20	Illinois
Sept. 27	@ Iowa
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Oregon
Oct. 18	Michigan State
Oct. 25	UCLA
Nov. 1	@ Maryland
Nov. 8	@ Penn State
Nov. 15	Wisconsin
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 28	@ Purdue

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	87/100

The secondary had to be rebuilt nearly from scratch. The staff brought back Louis Moore, a former Hoosier who spent last season at Ole Miss, to stabilize the group. Returning starter Amare Ferrell and experienced DB Jamari Sharpe will be key pieces in helping this unit.

OVERVIEW: Indiana's unexpected rise to CFP contention was one of 2024's biggest surprises. Curt Cignetti now faces the challenge of proving it wasn't a fluke—and both he and the program believe it can be sustained.

The Hoosiers have few returning starters, but they aggressively addressed their losses through the transfer portal, just as they did last year. That heavy portal reliance introduces some volatility, but Cignetti has shown he can identify the right pieces and make them click.

If Indiana's evaluations hit again, there's no reason this team can't remain a Big Ten contender in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-3)



IOWA HAWKEYES

HEAD COACH: Kirk Ferentz
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Lester
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Phil Parker

RANK: 40

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (6-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Music City Bowl

IOWA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2004

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 55th

RETURNING STARTERS: 8
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Connor Colby,
TE Luke Lachey, RB Kaleb Johnson,
LB Jay Higgins, DB Sebastian Castro

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Mark
Gronowski, WR Sam Phillips,
LB Burke Gautcher, DL Jonah
Pace, DL Bryce Hawthorne

OFFENSE: Tim Lester sparked a noticeable uptick in production for Iowa's offense in 2024, though the Hawkeyes still found themselves near the bottom of the conference in total yardage. The hope now is to continue incremental growth built on last year's modest success.

New addition Mark Gronowski, a standout QB from South Dakota State, arrives in Iowa City with high expectations. Iowa's QB play remained among the worst in the Big Ten last season, and Gronowski has a real shot to bring stability and explosiveness to the position.

Replacing Kaleb Johnson won't be easy, but sophomore RB Kamari Moulton showed flashes of promise as a freshman, including a breakout 100-yard game against Maryland. He'll be expected to shoulder a much larger load in 2025.

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Max Llewellyn

Iowa Athletics

At WR, Iowa brings back a trio of reliable options in Jacob Gill, Reece Vander Zee, and Seth Anderson—players who saw limited production due to ineffective QB play. The TE room remains a strength as usual, led by Addison Ostrenga, who will be featured heavily in the passing game.

The O-line, which returns three starters, remains the foundation of the offense. Iowa finished second in the Big Ten in rushing last season, and this experienced unit should again pave the way for consistent ground success.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Phil Parker faces one of his bigger challenges in recent memory after the defense slipped a bit in 2024 and lost multiple cornerstone players from the front seven.

Up front, the D-line still looks formidable. Max Llewellyn and Aaron Graves combined for 11.5 sacks last season and should be the tone-setters for a group that thrives on physicality.

The LB corps enters a transition phase. With longtime stalwarts gone, it's now players like Jaxon Rexroth—who saw the field in every game last season but never started—who need to step into starting roles. Iowa's tradition of developing LBs gives this group some built-in optimism despite the turnover.

While the secondary wasn't as dominant last year, there's hope for a bounceback. Star DB Xavier Nwankpa leads the way in his senior season, and while Deshaun Lee and Koen Entringer don't bring much starting experience, they logged plenty of game reps in 2024. The

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Albany
Sept. 6	@ Iowa State
Sept. 13	UMass
Sept. 19	@ Rutgers
Sept. 27	Indiana
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Wisconsin
Oct. 18	Penn State
Oct. 25	Minnesota
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Oregon
Nov. 15	@ USC
Nov. 22	Michigan State
Nov. 28	@ Nebraska

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	78/100

staff believes they're ready for bigger roles, and if so, Iowa will lean on the secondary to improve this defense overall.

OVERVIEW: The narrative flipped a bit for Iowa last season: improved offensive execution was met with an uncharacteristic dip on defense. As they move into 2025, the goal is to get both units firing at once, and to capture a successful season in the division-less Big Ten.

Adding a dual-threat QB like Gronowski adds intrigue, but losing Kaleb Johnson leaves a void in the backfield that won't be easy to fill. And while there's always faith in Iowa's defensive system, it's fair to wonder how long it will take for the new pieces to gel.

Under Kirk Ferentz, Iowa rarely bottoms out—but there's no clear indication that this team is built to take a major leap either. A solid floor is still in place, but the ceiling likely stays where it is.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (5-4)

MARYLAND TERRAPINS

HEAD COACH: Mike Locksley
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Sumlin, Pep Hamilton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ted Monachino, A. Abdul-Rahim

RANK: 69



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (1-8)

CONFERENCE RANK: 17th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

MARYLAND AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2001

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 85th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Kaden Prather, WR Tai Felton, DL Jordan Phillips, DB Dante Trader Jr., RB Roman Hemby

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jalil Farooq, OL Rahtrel Perry, TE Dorian Fleming, QB Justyn Martin, DB Dontay Joyner

OFFENSE: Even during an otherwise disappointing 2024 season, Maryland's offense remained respectable. Still, Mike Locksley made a bold move by firing Josh Gattis and hiring longtime NFL offensive coordinator Pep Hamilton to reshape the attack.

A quarterback competition is underway between UCLA transfer Justyn Martin and true freshman Malik Washington. Regardless of who wins the job, they'll benefit from the combined guidance of Locksley and Kevin Sumlin—both proven QB developers.

At RB, Maryland must move on from Roman Hemby, but there's optimism surrounding redshirt sophomore Nolan Ray. He averaged five yards per carry last season, slightly more efficient than Hemby, and could bring more



Nolan Ray

Matt Germack / Testudo Times

consistency to the ground game. Redshirt freshman DeJuan Williams also figures to be in the mix after flashing potential in limited action.

The WR room saw a major retool, with Kaleb Webb and Jalil Farooq joining via the transfer portal. Farooq, a former Oklahoma standout, is just one season removed from a 600-yard campaign, and both wideouts bring high ceilings to this offense.

Up front, however, is where the most concern lies. The O-line suffered heavy portal attrition, and at least two projected starters will be new additions. Depth is so thin that true freshman Jaylen Gilchrist could be thrust into a starting role at guard. Growing pains here are virtually guaranteed.

DEFENSE: On the other side of the ball, Locksley brought in Ted Monachino as co-defensive coordinator, hoping to reverse the defensive collapse that derailed the end of 2024.

Maryland is leaning heavily on St. Francis transfer Eyan Thomas to make an impact on the D-line. Like their offensive counterparts, the defensive trenches are dangerously thin, meaning underclassmen will have to develop quickly to fill key roles. This could result in some breakout players this season, with four-star freshman Bryce Jenkins as a potential candidate.

The LB group, by contrast, is more stable. Led by junior Michael Harris, this unit helped anchor a respectable run defense last year and should again be a relative strength.

Fixing the secondary is a more daunting task.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 5	Northern Illinois
Sept. 13	Towson
Sept. 20	@ Wisconsin
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Washington
Oct. 11	Nebraska
Oct. 18	@ UCLA
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Indiana
Nov. 8	@ Rutgers
Nov. 15	@ Illinois
Nov. 22	Michigan
Nov. 29	@ Michigan State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	67/100

Maryland gave up nearly 250 passing yards per game in 2024, and a hard reset was needed. Newcomers like Jamare Glasker and Dontay Joyner are expected to help change the narrative after last year's struggles.

OVERVIEW: Following his worst season since 2020, Mike Locksley opted for a strategic reset, reshuffling his staff and allowing significant roster turnover on both sides of the ball.

While Maryland landed a few portal wins—particularly at WR and QB—the overall net loss, especially in the trenches, is a major concern. The line of scrimmage is not just thin, it's one of the most underdeveloped in the Big Ten, a fact that could haunt them throughout the season.

The early schedule presents opportunities, and a fast start could set the stage for bowl eligibility. Still, glaring structural issues cap this team's upside, making 2025 more likely to be a rebuilding year than a breakthrough one.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (1-8)



MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

HEAD COACH: Jonathan Smith
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Lindgren
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Rossi

RANK: 37

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 13th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

MICHIGAN STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2015

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 30th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Luke Newman,
RB Nate Carter, DL Khris Bogle,
DB Charles Brantley

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Elijah
Tau-Tolliver, DL Grady Kelly, DL
David Santiago, DB Nijhay Burt,
DB Joshua Eaton

OFFENSE: Brian Lindgren's offense stalled during the back half of Big Ten play in 2024, but several young playmakers flashed promise that bodes well for the future.

QB Aidan Chiles had an up-and-down first season as the full-time starter, showing both raw potential and growing pains. Now a redshirt sophomore entering his third year in the system, he brings high upside into 2025.

The Spartans dipped into the portal to find a new lead RB, landing Elijah Tau-Tolliver from Sacramento State. He brings immediate value after rushing for nearly 1,000 yards and seven touchdowns for the Hornets last fall.

Chiles will again have some of his top targets back, including breakout WR Nick Marsh, who



Nick Marsh

Kimberly P. Mitchell / USA Today Network

had a stellar freshman campaign, and reliable TE Jack Veiling. Michigan State also reinforced the receiving corps with proven transfers like Rodney Bullard, Chrishon McCray, and Omari Kelly—all of whom bring production from the Group of Five and FCS levels.

In the trenches, both starting tackles return in Stanton Ramil and Ashton Lepo, providing some stability. One of the most notable additions to the O-line is Oregon State transfer Luka Vincic, a player familiar with Smith from their time in Corvallis. Overall, this unit looks deeper and more physically mature than it did a year ago.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Joe Rossi helped this unit overachieve in 2024, managing to produce a solid campaign despite heavy offseason turbulence. Expectations are higher this time around.

The D-line looks both deeper and more versatile. Veteran DT Alex VanSumeren anchors the group alongside key returners like Ru'Quan Buckley and Ben Roberts. The addition of Air Force transfer David Santiago adds explosiveness—he's coming off a breakout year for the Falcons.

At LB, Michigan State brings back reliable contributors in Darius Snow and Wayne Matthews III. BYU transfer Aisea Moa joins the mix, offering intriguing potential as a physical, athletic presence in the middle.

In the secondary, there's strong experience returning with safeties Nikai Martinez and Malik Spencer holding down the back end. Texas

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Western Michigan
Sept. 6	Boston College
Sept. 13	Youngstown State
Sept. 20	@ USC
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Nebraska
Oct. 11	UCLA
Oct. 18	@ Indiana
Oct. 25	Michigan
Nov. 1	@ Minnesota
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Penn State
Nov. 22	@ Iowa
Nov. 29	Maryland

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	80/100

State transfer Joshua Eaton, who started every game last season, adds veteran presence at corner. This unit was average in 2024 but now seems poised to improve with more cohesion.

OVERVIEW: Jonathan Smith walked into a tough situation last year and immediately got to work reshaping the program. Entering his second season, Michigan State looks more like the team Smith envisions long-term.

Chiles is still a work in progress, but his continued growth paired with a more complete O-line should boost the offense's consistency. On defense, Rossi has a much more stable roster to work with and could build on a strong debut.

Michigan State has a high ceiling when the right coach is at the helm. After several chaotic years, 2025 feels like the season where Smith begins to truly reestablish the program's identity—and solidifies his status as the long-term answer in East Lansing.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (3-6)

MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

HEAD COACH: Sherrone Moore
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chip Lindsey, Steve Casula
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Don Martindale

RANK: 19



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (5-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the ReliaQuest Bowl

MICHIGAN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2023

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 29th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Kalel Mullings,
TE Colston Loveland, DL Kenneth Grant,
DL Mason Graham, DB Will Johnson

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Bryce Underwood,
DB TJ Metcalf, RB Justice Haynes,
WR Donaven McCulley, WR Anthony Simpson

OFFENSE: Michigan's offensive struggles were a key limitation in 2024, and new offensive coordinator Chip Lindsey is tasked with bringing Sherrone Moore's vision to life in a more dynamic way this fall.

All eyes are on true freshman QB Bryce Underwood, the most hyped prospect Michigan has landed in years. The Wolverines will hand him the keys from day one, hoping his elite talent can translate quickly. If he falters early, veteran Mikey Keene provides a reliable fallback option.

There's fresh firepower in the RB room with Alabama transfer Justice Haynes arriving in Ann Arbor. Though his 2024 season didn't live up to expectations, Haynes showed flashes of elite ability. Behind him, Michigan has strong depth with Jordan Marshall and Micah Ka'apana.



TJ Guy

Lindsay Budin / Maize n Brew

The WR group looks much improved from last season. Donaven McCulley and Anthony Simpson are expected to be primary targets after battling injuries, and their return should add explosiveness to the passing game. At TE, Marlin Klein steps into a bigger role following the departure of Colston Loveland, and he's already had meaningful reps in this offense.

Up front, the O-line returns three starters, including veteran center Greg Crippen. Despite Michigan's offensive inconsistency, this group still paved the way for the seventh-best rushing attack in the Big Ten while allowing just 17 sacks. With the addition of 5-star OT Andrew Babalola and a mix of experience and upside, this unit remains one of the team's strengths.

DEFENSE: With three early NFL Draft departures and several longtime starters gone, Don Martindale steps into a tough situation as he takes over as defensive coordinator.

DE TJ Guy leads the charge on the D-line after notching 5.5 sacks last season. While he's the headliner, the Wolverines are counting on players like Rayshaun Benny and Trey Pierce to make the leap from rotation players to reliable starters in 2025.

There's far less concern at LB. Jaishawn Barham and Ernest Hausmann return as the leaders of the defense and provide a dependable foundation at the second level.

The secondary, expected to carry this defense early on, gets a major boost with the return of Rod Moore, who missed all of 2024 due to injury. The additions of SEC transfers TJ Metcalf

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	New Mexico
Sept. 6	@ Oklahoma
Sept. 13	Central Michigan
Sept. 20	@ Nebraska
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Wisconsin
Oct. 11	@ USC
Oct. 18	Washington
Oct. 25	@ Michigan State
Nov. 1	Purdue
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Northwestern
Nov. 22	@ Maryland
Nov. 29	Ohio State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	86/100

and Caleb Anderson add veteran experience to a room that lost several stars but still has the tools to be a strength.

OVERVIEW: Michigan leaned on a veteran-heavy roster last season, and even with all that talent, Moore's first 10 games as full-time head coach were shaky. But a late-season surge and the commitment of Bryce Underwood reignited belief in the program's direction heading into 2025.

There's plenty of buzz surrounding this team with a new play-caller, a highly touted freshman QB, and a renewed sense of optimism. Still, expectations should be tempered—there are growing pains ahead, especially on defense.

Michigan might be a year away from serious national contention, but the foundation is being laid for something special under Moore. If Underwood can live up to the hype early, this team could accelerate that timeline.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (6-3)



MINNESOTA GOLDEN GOPHERS

HEAD COACH: P. J. Fleck
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Harbaugh Jr., Matt Simon
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Monroe, Danny Collins

RANK: 27

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (5-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Duke's Mayo Bowl

MINNESOTA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1967

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 40th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Cody Lindenberg, WR Daniel Jackson, OL Aireontae Ersery, OL Tyler Cooper

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Marcellus Marshall, WR Javon Tracy, WR Logan Loya, LB Jeff Roberson, DB Jaylen Bowden

OFFENSE: Minnesota achieved a balanced offensive attack in 2024, and with staff continuity and several key returners, the Golden Gophers are confident they can replicate that success this season.

QB Drake Lindsey enters the fall as the unquestioned starter after fending off all competition during the offseason. While still just a redshirt freshman, his upside has turned heads heading into 2025.

In the backfield, the Gophers are in great shape. Veteran RB Darius Taylor returns for his third season and is among the most dependable backs in the country. Minnesota bolstered its depth by adding Marshall's 2024 starter A.J. Turner and Washington transfer Cam Davis, a 4-star prospect with significant experience.



Darrius Taylor

Al Goldis / Star Tribune

The WR corps takes a hit with the departure of Daniel Jackson, but help arrived through the portal in UCLA's Logan Loya, a steady veteran presence. Le'Meke Brockington is also back after a strong 2024, and TE Jameson Geers gives Lindsey a massive 6'5" safety valve over the middle.

Pass protection was a strength for the O-line last season, but the run blocking left room for improvement. This year's group will feature a different look, with only Greg Johnson and Ashton Beers returning as starters. Transfers like Marcellus Marshall are expected to plug in and elevate the unit's overall performance.

DEFENSE: Minnesota's defense was the backbone of the team in 2024, consistently keeping games within reach. Even with the departure of co-defensive coordinator Corey Hetheman, the Gophers expect similar results this fall.

The D-line helped limit opponents to under 110 rushing yards per game last season, and four key contributors—Anthony Smith, Deven Eastern, Jalen Logan-Redding, and Lucas Finnissy—are all back up front once again.

Replacing All-Big Ten LB Cody Lindenberg won't be easy, but the addition of Oklahoma State transfer Jeff Roberson softens the blow. Maverick Baranowski returns at Mike LB, offering valuable continuity in the middle.

The secondary was among the Big Ten's best in 2024, and that trend should continue. Star DB Koi Perich returns after an All-Big Ten campaign, and he'll be joined by experienced starters Kerry Brown and Aidan Gousby to lead one

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Buffalo
Sept. 6	Northwestern State
Sept. 13	@ California
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Rutgers
Oct. 4	@ Ohio State
Oct. 11	Purdue
Oct. 17	Nebraska
Oct. 25	@ Iowa
Nov. 1	Michigan State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 14	@ Oregon
Nov. 22	@ Northwestern
Nov. 29	Wisconsin

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	84/100

of the league's most experienced back ends.

OVERVIEW: A 2–3 start in 2024 pushed Minnesota off the national radar, but few noticed the Gophers went 5–2 over their final seven games—including two ranked wins, with both losses coming down to the wire. That strong finish wasn't enough to attract much attention this offseason, as teams like Illinois and Indiana have taken up more of the spotlight. Yet Minnesota may be better positioned to surprise than either of them.

The defense should once again be a reliable force, and if the offense takes a meaningful step forward, this could be one of the Big Ten's most unexpected success stories in 2025.

Much depends on Lindsey's development at QB, but with experience all around him and a stable coaching staff, he's set up well to grow into the leader Minnesota needs to make a serious run.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)

NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

HEAD COACH: Matt Rhule
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dana Holgorsen
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Butler, Glenn Thomas

RANK: 38



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (3-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Pinstripe Bowl

NEBRASKA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1999

RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK: 50th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Ty Robinson,
DB Tommi Hill, DL Nash Hut-
macher, WR Jahmal Banks, OL
Ben Scott, RB Rahmir Johnson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Dane
Key, WR Nyziah Hunter, OL
Elijah Pritchett, LB Dasan Mc-
Cullough, DB Andrew Marshall

OFFENSE: Dana Holgorsen gets his first full offseason to retool the Nebraska offense after being hired late in the 2024 campaign as offensive coordinator.

All eyes are on QB Dylan Raiola, whose high-profile flip to Nebraska was a massive boost to the program. His freshman season had its share of growing pains, but Raiola remains the long-term answer for the Huskers under center.

RB Emmett Johnson returns after nearly hitting 600 rushing yards in 2024 while averaging over five yards per carry. With the backfield now his to lead, the staff is also eager to see if former 3-star RB Kwinten Ives can carve out a role behind him. The Cornhuskers may be an effective run game away from having one of the top



Dylan Raiola

Steven Branscombe / Getty Images

offenses in the Big Ten for the 2025 season.

The WR group saw a major talent infusion this offseason. Kentucky transfer Dane Key brings proven production, and Nyziah Hunter—who broke out at Cal last season—adds more playmaking potential. Highly touted freshman Cortez Mills could also be in the mix if he acclimates quickly.

Raiola took too many hits in 2024, but the O-line continues to grow and develop. Sam Sledge, Gunnar Gottula, and Grant Seagren are three underclassmen drawing praise this offseason as they look to provide better protection in 2025.

DEFENSE: After Florida State hired away defensive coordinator Tony White, Matt Rhule elevated John Butler in an effort to maintain continuity and build on last season's defensive strides.

Despite several departures up front, the D-line remains a strength. Elijah Jeudy and Riley Van Poppel return to fortify the interior, while the arrival of elite transfer Williams Nwaneri has Husker fans buzzing about this group's upside.

The LB corps, however, was hit hard by the losses of John Bullock and Mikai Gbayor. Depth is a concern, and younger players like sophomore Vincent Shavers Jr. will need to emerge quickly.

Butler's prior role as DBs coach helped retain key contributors in the secondary, including DeShon Singleton. His promotion also helped attract blue-chip talent like Georgia transfer

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Cincinnati
Sept. 6	Akron
Sept. 13	Houston Christian
Sept. 20	Michigan
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Michigan State
Oct. 11	@ Maryland
Oct. 17	@ Minnesota
Oct. 25	Northwestern
Nov. 1	USC
Nov. 8	@ UCLA
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	@ Penn State
Nov. 28	Iowa

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	79/100

Justyn Rhett, who has long-term potential.

OVERVIEW: Nebraska has progressed under Matt Rhule exactly as his track record suggested—struggles in year one, a bowl appearance in year two. That same trajectory saw him reach double-digit wins and a conference title game in year three at both Temple and Baylor.

Could 2025 be that breakout year in Lincoln?

While significant improvement seems likely, repeating that leap may be a taller task this time around. Rhule didn't have to deal with coordinator departures at his previous stops, and losing Tony White is a major hurdle.

Still, Raiola is poised to take a step forward, especially with Holgorsen's guidance and an upgraded supporting cast. But for Nebraska to truly contend, the defense must answer several questions—and Butler will have to prove he's ready to lead from the coordinator chair.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)



NORTHWESTERN WILDCATS

HEAD COACH: David Braun
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Zach Lujan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim McGarigle

RANK: 65

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (2-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 16th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

NORTHWESTERN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2000

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 57th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR A. J. Henning,
LB Xander Mueller, WR Bryce
Kirtz, OL Josh Thompson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Griffin
Wilde, QB Preston Stone, TE
Alex Lines, LB Yanni Karlaftis,
DB Fred Davis, WR Chase Ferrell

OFFENSE: Northwestern finished with the worst offense in the Big Ten in 2024, as the passing game took a major step backward in Zach Lujan's first season as offensive coordinator. The Wildcats responded aggressively this offseason, adding seven transfers on offense—many of whom are expected to start.

SMU transfer QB Preston Stone is a proven veteran who threw 28 touchdowns as a sophomore for the Mustangs. While he lost the starting job to Kevin Jennings last season, Stone still has plenty of upside and should be an immediate upgrade in Evanston.

At RB, Cam Porter returns for his fifth season and brings the most experience to the room, though he's coming off a down year. Joseph Himon II and Caleb Komolafe saw consistent



Najee Story

Northwestern Athletics

carries last season and will remain in the rotation as well.

Wide receiver play should improve significantly with the addition of South Dakota State transfer Griffin Wilde, who racked up over 1,100 yards and 12 touchdowns last season. TE Alex Lines and WR Chase Farrell are promising young additions who could help stabilize an otherwise unproven group.

Injuries plagued the Wildcats' O-line in 2024, but the experience gained by last year's rotation could pay off in 2025. South Dakota State transfer Evan Beersten, a multi-year starter, headlines a trio of incoming linemen that Northwestern hopes can solidify the front.

DEFENSE: Head coach David Braun and defensive coordinator Tim McGarigle produced several standout defensive performances in 2024, signaling the unit's long-term potential.

Aidan Hubbard and Anto Saka were key contributors to the pass rush and return as foundational pieces up front. Alongside Najee Story and interior presence Carmine Bastone, the defensive line should be a strength again.

The loss of star LB Xander Mueller hurts, but Northwestern should remain strong at the position. The addition of Purdue transfer Yanni Karlaftis brings experience and upside to a group that is expected to remain stout.

Northwestern's secondary loses All-Big Ten DB Theran Johnson, leaving some questions on the defensive backfield. Still, the return of Josh Fusell and Braden Turner at corner helps maintain

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Tulane
Sept. 5	Western Illinois
Sept. 13	Oregon
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	UCLA
Oct. 4	Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 11	@ Penn State
Oct. 18	Purdue
Oct. 25	@ Nebraska
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 7	@ USC
Nov. 15	Michigan
Nov. 22	Minnesota
Nov. 29	@ Illinois

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	69/100

continuity, and Memphis transfer An'Darius Coffey offers much-needed depth and versatility.

OVERVIEW: The David Braun era has already been a rollercoaster. In 2023, Braun led the Wildcats to eight wins amid extreme turmoil. With more stability and his own set of coordinator hires in 2024, the team regressed to eight losses.

This offseason's aggressive pursuit of offensive improvement could be the key to reversing that trend. Lujan has had more time to tailor the offense to his spread principles, and the personnel is finally starting to match his vision this season.

Even during offensive struggles, the defense has consistently delivered gritty, high-effort performances. If both units trend upward in 2025, Northwestern could become a tough out—and potentially spring a few surprises in Big Ten play.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-7)

OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

HEAD COACH: Ryan Day
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Hartline, Keenan Bailey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Patricia, Tim Walton

RANK: 6



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 14-2 (7-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: 1st

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the National Title

OHIO STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2020

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 101st

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Will Howard, RB Quinshon Judkins, WR Eme-ka Egbubuka, DL Jack Sawyer, DL Tyleik Williams, DB Cody Simon

KEY ADDITIONS: RB CJ Donaldson, TE Max Klare, OL Phillip Daniels, DB Faheem Delane, DL Logan George

OFFENSE: The Buckeyes are reloading offensively in 2025, with Brian Hartline back as offensive coordinator. To help manage responsibilities, tight ends coach Keenan Bailey was promoted to co-offensive coordinator, providing Hartline with additional support as the unit transitions into a new era.

The time has come for a young quarterback to take the reins in Columbus. Julian Sayin, the No. 1 QB in the 2024 recruiting class, is expected to start and has all the tools to become a star quickly. He'll be pushed by Lincoln Kienholz and true freshman Tavien St. Clair, giving Ohio State intriguing depth at the position.

After biding his time, James Peoples is ready to emerge as the lead back. The Buckeyes also added West Virginia standout CJ Donaldson



Caleb Downs

Athlon Sports

for depth and versatility. Keep an eye on highly touted freshman Bo Jackson, who could work his way into the rotation.

As always, the WR room will be one of the nation's best. Freshman phenom Jeremiah Smith leads a stacked group of pass catchers, and the tight end room is just as strong. Will Kacmarek returns as a reliable option, and Max Klare joins from the transfer portal and creates depth at the TE position that is unrivaled in college football this year.

The O-line lost a significant chunk of talent to the NFL, but the Buckeyes return experience in Carson Hinzman, Tegra Tshabola, and Luke Montgomery. Two incoming transfer tackles are also expected to compete for starting roles and help stabilize the unit.

DEFENSE: A new era begins on defense under coordinator Matt Patricia, as Ohio State looks to maintain the elite standard set by Jim Knowles over the last two seasons.

Defensive line depth is the biggest question for the Buckeyes. Kayden McDonald is locked in as a starter at tackle, but proven depth is limited. The staff brought in Logan George from Idaho State—who posted 5.5 sacks last year—as a potential diamond in the rough.

At linebacker, Ohio State is in much better shape. Veterans Arvell Reese and Sonny Styles bring leadership and production, while rising stars like Riley Pettijohn add excitement to the mix.

The secondary should be among the best in the

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Texas
Sept. 6	Grambling State
Sept. 13	Ohio
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ Washington
Oct. 4	Minnesota
Oct. 11	@ Illinois
Oct. 18	@ Wisconsin
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Penn State
Nov. 8	@ Purdue
Nov. 15	UCLA
Nov. 22	Rutgers
Nov. 29	@ Michigan

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	10/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	93/100

country. Caleb Downs and Davison Igbinosun form a dynamic duo, and the staff is high on true freshman Faheem Delane, who may contribute early in a rotational role.

OVERVIEW: After reaching the mountaintop in 2024, Ohio State experienced the typical aftermath of championship success. Both coordinators departed for other jobs, and a wave of underclassmen declared early for the NFL draft.

Still, Ryan Day has consistently shown the ability to reload rather than rebuild, and he's never finished with fewer than 11 wins in a full season at the helm. Questions about D-line depth and quarterback youth are valid—but may ultimately prove overblown given the talent on hand.

With elite playmakers, strong leadership, and top-tier coaching, the Buckeyes will once again be a fixture in the national title conversation. A repeat championship is not just possible—it's within reach.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (8-1)



OREGON DUCKS

HEAD COACH: Dan Lanning
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Will Stein, Drew Mehringer
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tosh Lupoi, Chris Hampton

RANK: 9

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 13-1 (9-0)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: 3rd

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Rose Bowl

OREGON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 109th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Tez Johnson,
OL Ajani Cornelius, DL Jordan
Burch, LB Jeffrey Bassa, DB
Jabbar Muhammad

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Dakorien
Moore, RB Makhi Hughes,
DL Bear Alexander, DB Dillon
Thieneman, OL Isaiah World

OFFENSE: Oregon enters 2025 without several longtime offensive cornerstones, but with Will Stein back as offensive coordinator, the Ducks should remain one of the nation's most dangerous offensive units.

Now is the moment for former five-star QB Dante Moore to take center stage as Oregon's starting quarterback. For the first time since Dan Lanning arrived, the Ducks won't have a proven, battle-tested QB under center, making this a key developmental challenge for the staff.

Oregon's highest-profile transfer portal addition was Tulane star RB Makhi Hughes, who racked up over 2,700 rushing yards and 24 touchdowns across the last two seasons. The Ducks also bring back Noah Whittington, a key contributor from 2024, to give the backfield depth.



Evan Stewart

Athlon Sports

At WR, Evan Stewart has a chance to break out as a superstar, and Gary Bryant Jr. returns healthy after flashing last season. Even with that experience, Oregon will look to talented freshman Dakorien Moore and Alabama transfer Malik Benson to round out a deep and explosive group. TE Kenyon Sadiq also returns as a versatile weapon.

O-line continuity is a concern. Center Lapan Laloulou returns, but three starters are gone from last year's unit. Transfer tackles Isaiah World and Alex Harkey arrive with high expectations, and their play will be critical to the Ducks' offensive ceiling.

DEFENSE: Oregon's 2024 defense flashed elite potential but had key breakdowns—especially in the Rose Bowl—that proved costly. Coordinator Tosh Lupoi is tasked with filling the gaps, particularly as the defense returns just four starters.

The defensive line looks every bit the part of a Big Ten front. Matayo Uiagalelei and A'Mauri Washington are back, and Georgia transfer Bear Alexander adds serious firepower. With strong depth behind them, the Ducks should again be effective pressuring the quarterback.

The LBs, however, must bounce back after Oregon finished in the bottom half of the Big Ten in rushing defense. Leading tackler Bryce Boettcher returns and will be flanked by Teitum Tuioti and Devon Jackson, who also logged major reps in 2024.

In the secondary, Oregon reloaded impressively via the transfer portal. All-Big Ten corner

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Montana State
Sept. 6	Oklahoma State
Sept. 13	@ Northwestern
Sept. 20	Oregon State
Sept. 27	@ Penn State
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Indiana
Oct. 18	@ Rutgers
Oct. 25	Wisconsin
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Iowa
Nov. 14	Minnesota
Nov. 22	USC
Nov. 29	@ Washington

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	90/100

Theran Johnson and Purdue safety Dillon Thieneman are plug-and-play starters who should stabilize a unit that sent several players to the NFL.

OVERVIEW: Dan Lanning has an opportunity in 2025 to show that Oregon is no longer a program that rebuilds, but one that reloads. Even with all of the Duck's recent success, they have failed to consistently sustain an elite level of play like some of the top programs in the nation.

Oregon is breaking in a new QB and returns only four starters on each side of the football so nobody would blame them if they took a step back in 2025.

But that doesn't align with Lanning's vision for Oregon football, which has been building during his three seasons with the program. They want a national title. And despite the uncertainty before them, their window is open again in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (7-2)

PENN STATE NITTANY LIONS

HEAD COACH: James Franklin
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Kotelnicki, Ty Howie
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Knowles, Anthony Pointdexter

RANK: 1



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 13-3 (8-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: 5th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Orange Bowl

PENN STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2016

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 33rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 8 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: TE Tyler Warren, OL Sal Wormley, WR Julian Fleming, LB Abdul Carter, DB Kobe King, DB Jaylen Reed

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Trebor Pena, WR Devonte Ross, DB King Mack, DB Daryus Dixon, OL TJ Shanahan Jr.

OFFENSE: Penn State's offensive growth in 2024 showed exactly why the Nittany Lions brought in Andy Kotelnicki as offensive coordinator. With another year of continuity, Big Ten defenses should be on high alert—this unit looks even more dangerous in 2025.

Drew Allar returns for his senior season at QB. While some fans may still dwell on his CFP semifinal struggles, he's poised for a strong finish to his college career with another year in Kotelnicki's system and familiar weapons surrounding him.

Penn State boasts the best RB tandem in the country. Nick Singleton and Kaytron Allen have torched Big Ten defenses for three straight seasons and will go down as one of the greatest backfield duos in college football history.



Dani Dennis-Sutton

Joe Hermitt / Penn Live

Finding a go-to wideout for Allar was a top off-season priority, and the Nittany Lions delivered. Syracuse transfer Terbor Pena headlines the newcomers, while USC's Kyrion Hudson and 1,000-yard Troy standout Devonte Ross add even more firepower to the receiving corps.

The O-line, one of the best in the nation last season, returns four starters and runs two-deep with experienced, high-level talent. This group paved the way for over 200 rushing yards per game and allowed just 20 sacks in 16 games—a key to the offense's continued success.

DEFENSE: Penn State made the offseason's biggest splash by luring Jim Knowles away from Ohio State and making him the highest-paid coordinator in the country. The defense was just a step short of elite in 2024, and the program hopes Knowles is the missing piece.

While the D-line will feel the loss of Abdul Carter, the rest of the unit remains largely intact. Dani Dennis-Sutton is expected to emerge as the next great Penn State edge rusher, and players like Kaleb Artis, Zane Durant, and Alonzo Ford Jr. form a strong, experienced core.

Linebackers Tony Rojas and Dominic DeLuca return after combining for a ton of production last season, and they'll anchor the middle of the defense again in 2025. If Penn State's defense has a weak point, it would be the LBs this season.

The secondary took the biggest offseason hit with Jaylen Reed and Kevin Winston Jr. off to

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Nevada
Sept. 6	FIU
Sept. 13	Villanova
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Oregon
Oct. 4	@ UCLA
Oct. 11	Northwestern
Oct. 18	@ Iowa
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Ohio State
Nov. 8	Indiana
Nov. 15	@ Michigan State
Nov. 22	Nebraska
Nov. 29	@ Rutgers

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	95/100

the NFL. Still, All-Big Ten DB A.J. Harris and ballhawk Zakee Wheatley—who notched three interceptions last season—lead a group with the potential to remain among the conference's best.

OVERVIEW: Penn State is all-in for 2025. With more than half of its starters returning and the blockbuster hiring of Jim Knowles fresh off a national title, the investment in this roster is unmistakable.

It's rare to see a team reload so thoroughly after coming so close to a championship. If there's a concern, it lies in how quickly the defense adjusts to Knowles' system, but that's a risk the Nittany Lions are willing to take.

This is a team no one wants to face. And with the returning talent, revamped scheme, and a clear title window, 2025 may be Penn State's best shot at a national championship for the foreseeable future.

RECORD PREDICTION: 11-1 (8-1)



PURDUE BOILERMAKERS

HEAD COACH: Barry Odom
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Henson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Michael Scherer

RANK: 89

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 1-11 (0-9)

CONFERENCE RANK: 18th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

PURDUE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2000

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 127th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Dillon Thieneman, DL Shitta Sillah, LB Kydran Jenkins, OL Marcus Mbow, QB Hudson Card

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Malachi Singleton, TE Christian Moore, WR Charles Ross, DL Marcus Moore Jr., DL TJ Lindsey

OFFENSE: Barry Odom hired former USC offensive coordinator Josh Henson to take over the Purdue offense, and while Henson's track record is a mixed bag, it was clear he and the Trojans were headed for a split either way this offseason. They're hoping that Henson can ignite a spark for an offense full of unproven players.

The Boilermakers overhauled their QB room, bringing in a trio of talented but inexperienced signal-callers. Sophomore Malachi Singleton appears to be the favorite to win the starting job, though Evans Chuba and Ryan Browne will also be firmly in the mix.

One of the few returning starters is senior RB Devin Mockobee, who brings valuable experience and production to an otherwise brand-new



Devin Mockobee

Mark Konezny / USA Today Sports

offense. Malachi Thomas from Virginia Tech has over 1,000 career rushing yards, and is another excellent addition.

At WR, former Georgia four-star Nitro Tuggle headlines the additions and may be the most talented player in the room. But the most proven weapon is Charles Ross, who transfers in from USC but did his most impressive work at San Jose State.

Henson also hit the reset button on the offensive line, leaning heavily on the portal to reconstruct the unit. Former SEC All-Freshman Bradyn Joiner and multiple UNLV additions provide a new look up front, giving Purdue hope for a more cohesive group.

DEFENSE: Few defenses in the country struggled more than Purdue's in 2024. To turn things around, Odom brought in defensive coordinator Michael Scherer from UNLV in hopes of sparking a quick transformation.

One promising piece is former four-star DL TJ Lindsey, who brings high upside. Purdue also landed two key playmakers from Akron—CJ Nunnally IV and Marcus Moore Jr.—who bring immediate impact potential and room to develop into future stars.

At linebacker, the Boilermakers added UNLV transfer Mani Powell and Arkansas products Carson Dean and Alex Sanford Jr., injecting youth and talent into a unit that badly needed it. Depth, however, remains a concern here.

The secondary is by far the least proven group. Tahj Ra-El and Chalil Cummings arrived from

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Ball State
Sept. 6	Southern Illinois
Sept. 13	USC
Sept. 20	@ Notre Dame
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Illinois
Oct. 11	@ Minnesota
Oct. 18	@ Northwestern
Oct. 25	Rutgers
Nov. 1	@ Michigan
Nov. 8	Ohio State
Nov. 15	@ Washington
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 28	Indiana

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	62/100

Memphis thanks to a connection with a staff member, and their pre-existing chemistry could help a room that otherwise lacks experience. Still, this unit may be Purdue's biggest question mark in 2025.

OVERVIEW: Purdue's roster churn this offseason was staggering. Their 53 outgoing transfers rank second all-time in the portal era, trailing only Colorado's 55-player exodus in 2023.

This overhaul was necessary. Purdue finished 2024 as arguably the worst power conference team in the country and enters this season on an 11-game losing streak.

There's uncertainty across the board, and the Boilermakers will be asking a lot of young and unproven players. The schedule won't do them any favors, but this year should serve as a reset—an opportunity to identify which of their 40-plus incoming transfers can serve as long-term building blocks.

RECORD PREDICTION: 2-10 (0-9)

RUTGERS SCARLET KNIGHTS

HEAD COACH: Greg Schiano
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirk Ciarrocca
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robb Smith, Zach Sparber

RANK: 35



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (4-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the
Guaranteed Rate Bowl

RUTGERS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2012

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 7th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Kyle Monan-
gai, OL Hollin Pierce, WR
Naseim Brantley, DB Robert
Longerbeam, DL Aaron Lewis

KEY ADDITIONS: DB Jett Elad,
DB Jacobie Henderson, RB CJ
Campbell Jr., TE Colin Weber,
WR DT Sheffield

OFFENSE: Kirk Ciarrocca's offensive vision was nearly flawless last season, as Rutgers showcased one of the most punishing rushing attacks in the country, complemented by a solid, efficient passing game.

QB Athan Kaliakmanis returns for his senior year after a quietly effective 2024 campaign. While not nationally flashy, his advanced metrics indicate a steady, dependable presence under center.

Rutgers found its next workhorse running back in CJ Campbell Jr., who transferred from Florida Atlantic after rushing for 800 yards at over five yards per carry last season. Depth is strong, with Samuel Brown V and Antwan Raymond returning as valuable rotational backs. The Scarlet Knights will be equipped to replicate



Ian Strong

Andrew Mills / NJ.Com

their success on the ground this season.

The Scarlet Knights have quietly assembled one of the Big Ten's most underrated receiving corps. Ian Strong and KJ Duff, both productive as underclassmen last year, return to anchor the group, while the addition of star WR DT Sheffield from North Texas, combined with a strong recruiting class, adds both top-end talent and depth.

A senior-heavy offensive line leads Rutgers into 2025, with veterans Bryan Felter and Gus Zilinskas among the most seasoned starters in the conference, creating a front that boasts near-unmatched experience.

DEFENSE: Robb Smith and Zach Sparber step in as co-defensive coordinators this season, tasked with turning around a defense that regressed last year.

The Scarlet Knights leaned heavily on the transfer portal to bolster the defensive line, adding Eric O'Niell and Darold DeNgohe, both following Sparber from James Madison. Transfer DL Bradley Weaver from Ohio is a notable addition, coming off a senior season with 8.5 sacks.

In the linebacker corps, Dariel Djabome returns after surpassing 100 tackles last season and will anchor the middle. However, the loss of star LB Mohamed Toure—coming off an ACL injury—is a significant blow to a unit that struggled against the run, ranking 16th in rush yards allowed in the Big Ten.

Rutgers also made high-profile portal moves in the secondary, adding Jett Elad and Cam

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Ohio
Sept. 6	Miami (OH)
Sept. 13	Norfolk State
Sept. 19	Iowa
Sept. 27	@ Minnesota
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 10	@ Washington
Oct. 18	Oregon
Oct. 25	@ Purdue
Nov. 1	@ Illinois
Nov. 8	Maryland
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	@ Ohio State
Nov. 29	Penn State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	81/100

Miller. They join a young but promising group featuring sophomores Bo Mascoe and Kaj Sanders, who both contributed meaningfully last season.

OVERVIEW: In a Big Ten loaded with physical, developmental programs, Greg Schiano has steadily forced Rutgers into the mix as a team with identity and grit.

For 2025, the Scarlet Knights return their starting QB, boast a wealth of experience on the offensive line, and possess a deep, talented receiving corps.

Though the defense took a step back last season, the coaching shakeup and targeted portal additions could spark a turnaround.

Combined with a deliberate, effective approach in the transfer portal, Rutgers looks poised to be one of the Big Ten's biggest surprises this season.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (4-5)



UCLA BRUINS

HEAD COACH: DeShaun Foster
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tino Sunseri
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ikaika Malloe

RANK: 53

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 14th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UCLA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1998

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 111th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Ethan Garbers, LB Carson Schwesinger, OL Moliki Matavao, RB Keegan Jones, DB K. J. Wallace

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Nico Iamaleava, WR Mikey Matthews, OL Julian Armella, DB Andre Jordan Jr., DB Key Lawrence

OFFENSE: DeShaun Foster was impressed by Tino Sunseri's role in Indiana's 2024 turnaround and brought him on as UCLA's offensive coordinator this season. They're hopeful his skill at developing QBs will translate for this season and beyond.

After a lengthy saga, UCLA landed both Iamaleava brothers on their roster. Nico, the more proven QB from his time at Tennessee, will start in 2025 and is expected to lead the Bruins for the next couple of seasons. True freshman Madden Iamaleava will wait patiently for his opportunity.

Following an injury-plagued 2024, Jalen Berger returns as UCLA's starting running back, with Anthony Frias II providing additional depth. Anthony Woods, a former 1,000-yard rusher at



Keanu Williams

Luis Sinco / Los Angeles Times

Idaho, could also see significant playing time, adding experience to the backfield.

UCLA returns Kwazi Gilmer and Tuts Mokiao-Atimalala at wide receiver after solid performances last season. However, the most exciting addition may be Mikey Matthews, a talented young receiver who has flashed promise but has yet to fully reach his potential.

The offensive line returns three starters from a unit that gave up 32 sacks and blocked for the worst running game in the Big Ten. Veteran transfer Courtland Ford from Kentucky could help improve things up front, but significant progress is needed from returning contributors.

DEFENSE: UCLA's success in 2024 mostly came from their defense, and keeping Ikaika Malloe as defensive coordinator appears to be paying dividends.

The Bruins ranked fourth in the conference in rushing yards allowed last season, and they return defensive anchors Keanu Williams and Gary Smith III, along with experienced contributors Jacob Busic and Devin Aupiu.

UCLA loses two veteran linebackers who led the unit last year but will lean on Jalen Woods as their most seasoned tackler. Sophomore transfer Isaiah Chisom, who was lured away from Oregon State, could be the future at linebacker.

The Bruins addressed their biggest weakness—the secondary—with multiple portal additions. Andre Jordan Jr. and Key Lawrence join the defensive backfield, along with hometown starter

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Utah
Sept. 6	@ UNLV
Sept. 12	New Mexico
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ Northwestern
Oct. 4	Penn State
Oct. 11	@ Michigan State
Oct. 18	Maryland
Oct. 25	@ Indiana
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Nebraska
Nov. 15	@ Ohio State
Nov. 22	Washington
Nov. 29	@ USC

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	74/100

Jamier Johnson, who returns from Indiana. After a struggling secondary in 2024, UCLA hopes this revamped group can become a strength.

OVERVIEW: Much of UCLA's 2024 season was marked by offensive struggles and a lack of discipline, with the Bruins ranking in the top 10 for penalties per game. But to Foster's credit, 2024 was his first year as head coach, and he has made all the right moves this offseason.

UCLA emerged from a chaotic offseason with a QB for now and the future, a new offensive coordinator with a proven track record, and addressed key issues on the offensive line.

On defense, the Bruins aim to build on last year's strengths while significantly upgrading the secondary.

Overall, UCLA looks positioned to notch a few more Big Ten wins in 2025 and have the chance to earn a bowl game appearance.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (3-6)

USC TROJANS

HEAD COACH: Lincoln Riley
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Luke Huard
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: D'Anton Lynn, Eric Henderson

RANK: 12



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (4-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Las Vegas Bowl

USC AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2017

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 97th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Jonah Monheim, RB Woody Marks, QB Miller Moss, DB Akili Arnold, LB Easton Mascarenas-Arnold

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Husan Longstreet, OL DJ Wingfield, RB Waymond Jordan, DL Keeshawn Silver, DB DJ Harvey

OFFENSE: After a relatively inconsistent offensive season, Lincoln Riley promoted Luke Huard to offensive coordinator but will retain playcalling duties in 2025. It is uncharacteristic for a Riley-coached team to have struggles on offense, and those issues should be corrected this year.

Jayden Maiava steadily found his rhythm as USC's quarterback late last year and is expected to make a significant leap this season. Freshman five-star Husan Longstreet will push Maiava hard for the starting role and could see meaningful playing time in 2025.

The Trojans bolstered their backfield with two impressive transfers: JUCO Waymond Jordan, who averaged over 130 yards per game with 20 touchdowns last season, and Eli Sanders, a



Makai Lemon

Kyusun Gong / AP Photo

former New Mexico back who surpassed 1,000 rushing yards in 2024.

At wide receiver, Makai Lemon and Ja'Kobi Lane aim to form one of the Big Ten's top duos. Prince Strachan, a solid addition from Boise State, adds more firepower, while true freshmen Corey Simms and Tanook Hines are emerging talents to watch. Tight end Lake McRee returns after an excellent 2024 campaign.

USC's offensive line struggled at times last year and returns only two starters. However, promising underclassmen Elijah Paige and Tobias Raymond are stepping up, and the Trojans aggressively addressed the line via the transfer portal, landing power conference starters J'Onre Reed and DJ Wingfield.

DEFENSE: D'Anton Lynn's defensive rebuild took hold late in 2024, and USC enters 2025 with the most positive defensive momentum in years.

The defensive line saw some roster turnover as USC moved on from players who didn't fit Lynn's system, retaining key talents like Kameryn Fountain and Devan Thompkins. Transfers Keeshawn Silver, a former five-star and North Carolina standout, and Jamaal Jarrett from Georgia bolster the front.

Veteran linebacker Eric Gentry returns to lead a young corps seeking growth and consistency. Sophomore Desmon Stephens II, who appeared in all 13 games last season, is expected to take on a larger role.

In the secondary, USC landed All-Mountain

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Missouri State
Sept. 6	Georgia Southern
Sept. 13	@ Purdue
Sept. 20	Michigan State
Sept. 27	@ Illinois
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Michigan
Oct. 18	@ Notre Dame
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Nebraska
Nov. 7	Northwestern
Nov. 15	Iowa
Nov. 22	@ Oregon
Nov. 29	UCLA

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	88/100

West defensive back DJ Harvey from San Jose State and NC State standout Bishop Fitzgerald, marking a power move to strengthen the unit. Safety Kamari Ramsey, a vocal leader last year, remains a cornerstone of Lynn's defense.

OVERVIEW: USC's defense showed significant improvement in 2024, putting the Trojans in an exciting position heading into this season. However, much of that progress went unnoticed as USC lost five one-score games and finished with six total losses.

Offensive struggles and internal dysfunction contributed to the team's misfortunes, but with Lincoln Riley continuing to call the shots, it's reasonable to expect those issues to improve in 2025.

Riley has delivered on his promise to transform USC's defensive approach, and with a full year under Lynn's leadership, this could be a breakout season for the Trojans.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (7-2)



WASHINGTON HUSKIES

HEAD COACH: Jedd Fisch
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jimmie Dougherty
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Walters

RANK: 18

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (4-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Sun Bowl

WASHINGTON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2023

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 84th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Will Rogers, DB Cameron Broussard, LB Carson Bruener, TE Keleki Latu, WR Jeremiah Hunter

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Geirean Harchett, OL Carver Willis, WR Omari Evans, DB Alex McLaughlin, DB Tacario Davis

OFFENSE: After having offensive coordinator Brennan Carroll hired away to coach with his father in the NFL, Washington turned to Jimmie Dougherty to sustain the Huskies' offensive success this season.

QB Demond Williams Jr. flashed superstar potential late last season for Washington, and despite losing his offensive coordinator, Dougherty provides continuity as his QB coach from last season and was also the one who recruited him out of high school.

Washington has the luxury of returning a 1,000-yard RB in Jonah Coleman, along with a proven rotational back in Adam Mohammed.

Denzel Boston exploded onto the scene last season and will be a featured WR for this



Demond Williams Jr.

Mike Vorel / Getty Images

passing attack. After missing all of 2024 with an injury, some believe former Arizona WR Kevin Green Jr. can make a similar leap this year.

Washington will have the luxury of continuity on their offensive line this season, something they did not have last year. Drew Azzopardi, Maximum McCree, Soane Faasolo, and Landen Hatchett all started for the Huskies and return this season. Hatchett's brother Geirean transferred to Washington this offseason from Oklahoma. The Huskies also added Carver Willis from Kansas State, who boasts 18 career starts.

DEFENSE: Ironically, Washington's defensive coordinator Stephen Belichick also left to coach with his father. The Huskies made an exceptionally savvy hire by bringing in Ryan Walters, who struggled as a head coach but is a proven commodity as a coordinator.

Washington has focused on increasing their size in the trenches, adding Utah transfer Simote Pepa, who weighs in at 340 pounds. The defensive line has its work cut out this year, needing to replace every starter from 2024.

The Huskies secured their future at linebacker this offseason by landing two proven juniors: Al-Uqdah Taariq from Washington State and Xe'ree Alexander from UCF. Fisch also added another Arizona holdout, Jacob Mau, to provide additional depth.

Tacario Davis joins the list of transfers from Arizona—a multi-year All-Conference DB who will instantly be one of Washington's best defenders. In addition to Davis, they added All-Big

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Colorado State
Sept. 6	UC Davis
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ Washington State
Sept. 27	Ohio State
Oct. 4	@ Maryland
Oct. 10	Rutgers
Oct. 18	@ Michigan
Oct. 25	Illinois
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Wisconsin
Nov. 15	Purdue
Nov. 22	@ UCLA
Nov. 29	Oregon

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	86/100

Sky DB Alex McLaughlin from NAU. Ephesians Prysock and Dyson McCutcheon are also key returning players in a secondary that finished number one in the Big Ten in pass yards allowed last season.

OVERVIEW: Things weren't pretty for Washington in 2024, but the signs were there that this team isn't far removed from Big Ten contention.

Wins over USC and Michigan showcased what this team is capable of, and while the Huskies experienced some staff shakeup, the players on the roster have improved significantly.

With Williams at QB, the ceiling of the offense is raised considerably, and the Huskies defense has All-Conference caliber players dotted across the field.

With Jedd Fisch at the helm, the Huskies are capable of doing some serious damage in the Big Ten this year.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)

WISCONSIN BADGERS

HEAD COACH: Luke Fickell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Grimes
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Tressel

RANK: 48



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 15th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

WISCONSIN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big Ten

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2012

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 25th

RETURNING STARTERS: 8
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Chez Mellusi,
DB Hunter Wohler, LB Jake
Chaney, LB Jaheim Thomas, OL
Jack Nelson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jayden
Ballard, QB Billy Edwards Jr., QB
Danny O'Neil, DL Corey Walker,
LB Mason Reiger, DB D'Yoni Hill

OFFENSE: Luke Fickell's vision for the Wisconsin offense has been poorly executed through two seasons. Fickell named Jeff Grimes the new offensive coordinator, who has had a mixed track record recently.

Wisconsin added QB Billy Edwards Jr. from the transfer portal this offseason. Edwards Jr. showed promising flashes at Maryland in 2024 but was ultimately inconsistent in a difficult situation.

The rushing attack for the Badgers was solid overall last season, with proven backs Cade Yacamelli and Darrion Dupree set to spearhead their efforts on the ground this year.

WR Vinny Anthony II shined despite tough circumstances in the passing game last



Vinny Anthony II

Wisconsin Athletics

season, and Trech Kekahuna also had some big moments. As usual, Wisconsin also boasts a deep, steady tight end room led by junior Tucker Ashcraft.

Wisconsin's offensive line play remained strong in 2024, with Joe Brunner, Jake Renfro, and Riley Mahlman all returning as starters this season. This unit should continue to be a strength and complements Jeff Grimes' scheme well.

DEFENSE: Wisconsin's defense fell off a cliff in 2024 and struggled to stop the run throughout the season. Fickell and defensive coordinator Mike Tressel take great pride in their defense and immediately went to work addressing this collapse.

Wisconsin bolstered the defensive line by bringing in five transfers. Corey Walker, Charles Perkins, and Michael Garner are all pass rushers with starting experience. They also found their defensive anchor in Parker Peterson from Tulane, with talented sophomore Dillon Johnson expected to rotate in.

Louisville transfer linebacker Mason Reiger recorded five sacks for the Cardinals last season and will be a key addition to the middle of the defense. Despite last season's shortcomings, the return of Christian Alliegro is a welcome boost.

The return of one of the nation's best cornerback duos in Ricardo Hallman and Nyzier Fourqurean should ensure Wisconsin's pass defense remains impressive. They also acquired Matthew Traynor and Matt Jung via the transfer portal, both of whom will compete for

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Miami (OH)
Sept. 6	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 13	@ Alabama
Sept. 20	Maryland
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Michigan
Oct. 11	Iowa
Oct. 18	Ohio State
Oct. 25	@ Oregon
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Washington
Nov. 15	@ Indiana
Nov. 22	Illinois
Nov. 29	@ Minnesota

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	75/100

starting roles at the safety positions this year.

OVERVIEW: Things simply have not taken root during Fickell's first two seasons at Wisconsin. The Badgers' impressive 22-year bowl streak was snapped in 2024, that stat feels significant, and it certainly hit the fanbase hard.

To address their offensive concerns, Fickell turned to Jeff Grimes, but Grimes comes off a less-than-inspiring season at Kansas, where he was essentially demoted midseason. His whole career doesn't boil down to last year, but it's certainly a red flag.

Their defensive depth and talent level improved significantly this offseason, and they should be closer to the high bar Wisconsin football expects on that side of the ball.

2025 is a pivotal year for Wisconsin and for Fickell, whose future may be in question if the Badgers don't show positive results this season..

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-7)



BIG 12 CONFERENCE

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. ARIZONA STATE	11-3 (7-2)
2. IOWA STATE	11-3 (7-2)
3. BYU	11-2 (7-2)
4. COLORADO	9-4 (7-2)
5. BAYLOR	8-5 (6-3)
6. TCU	9-4 (6-3)
7. TEXAS TECH	8-5 (6-3)
8. KANSAS STATE	9-4 (5-4)
9. WEST VIRGINIA	6-7 (5-4)
10. KANSAS	5-7 (4-5)
11. CINCINNATI	5-7 (3-6)
12. HOUSTON	4-8 (3-6)
13. UTAH	5-7 (2-7)
14. ARIZONA	4-8 (2-7)
15. UCF	4-8 (2-7)
16. OKLAHOMA ST.	3-9 (0-9)

Projected to finish last in the Big 12, **Arizona State** shocked the country by sneaking into the conference title game and winning it in their first season. Many had overlooked an underrated coaching staff that quietly pieced together a winning roster during the offseason.

Iowa State entered 2024 with few believers but delivered its second Big 12 title game appearance in the last five seasons. It served as a reminder that Matt Campbell remains one of the best coaches in the country.

The Cougars fell victim to a tiebreaker that kept them from getting a second crack at Arizona State for a conference title. **BYU** reinvented themselves offensively and built upon some solid building blocks on defense, which were the driving forces behind their turnaround.

The Deion Sanders hype was clearly justified, as evidenced by **Colorado's** excellent 2024 campaign. The Buffaloes leapt into Big 12 title contention thanks to big plays from their stars, which made them a threat each and every week in conference play. Their O-line play still was a weakness, and limited their ceiling.

Baylor's midseason turnaround was one of the more remarkable developments in the conference. Dave Aranda's new hires on offense paid dividends, sparking a six-game winning streak to close the regular season.

Frustrating losses and inconsistent play defined **TCU's** 2024 campaign—despite having genuine potential to win a conference title. Still, the Horned Frogs managed to scrap their way to nine wins on the back of a lethal offense.

Texas Tech battled to stay competitive through-



Bryson Washington

Baylor Athletics

out the season despite a truly awful defensive performance, foreshadowed by their season opener against Abilene Christian where they surrendered 51 points. It's a modern miracle—and a testament to their offensive skill—that they won as many games as they did.

Kansas State looked like the team to beat in the Big 12 for much of the season, but ultimately dropped all of their biggest games, including three crucial losses in November.

Neal Brown fielded a solid team in 2024 that managed to finish above .500 in conference play, but some alarming signs and a few blow-out losses ultimately cost him his job at **West Virginia**.

After suffering six one-score losses, **Kansas** seemed to make it a personal vendetta to ruin Big 12 contenders' seasons late in the year. The Jayhawks single-handedly cost Colorado and BYU spots in the Big 12 title game—and derailed Iowa State's playoff hopes in the process.

Scott Satterfield corrected many of his year-one mistakes at **Cincinnati** and had the Bearcats sitting at 5-2 in mid-October. Unfortunately, they came out on the wrong end of five straight and missed a bowl for the second year in a row.

Expectations for Willie Fritz's first season at **Houston** were relatively low, and the year mostly played out as anticipated. The Cougars experienced growing pains but showed some signs of life with a handful of conference wins.

Arizona was projected to be a top 25 team, with an exciting group of returning players and

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 28	CINCY vs NEB
Aug. 29	GA TECH @ COLO
Aug. 30	AUB @ BAY
Aug. 30	UTAH @ UCLA
Sept. 6	OK ST @ UO
Sept. 6	ARMY @ KSU
Sept. 6	KU @ MIZZ
Sept. 6	IOWA @ ISU
Sept. 6	BAY @ SMU
Sept. 6	ASU @ MISS ST
Sept. 13	OR ST @ TTU
Sept. 13	PITT @ WVU
Sept. 20	SMU @ TCU
Sept. 20	BYU @ ECU
Sept. 20	UNC @ UCF

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

KENNY DILLINGHAM, ASU	A+
BRENT BRENNAN, UA	D
KILANI SITAKE, BYU	A
DAVE ARANDA, BAY	A
SCOTT SATTERFIELD, UC	C
DEION SANDERS, COLO	A+
WILLIE FRITZ, HOU	C+
MATT CAMPBELL, ISU	A+
LANCE LEIPOLD, KU	C-
CHRIS KLIEMAN, KSU	B
MIKE GUNDY, OKST	F
SONNY DYKES, TCU	B+
JOEY MCGUIRE, TTU	B
GUS MALZAHN, UCF	F
KYLE WHITTINGHAM, UU	D-
NEAL BROWN, WVU	C-

a respected new head coach in Brent Brennan. But the Wildcats suffered a harsh reality check, dropping seven conference games—many of them in blowout fashion.

Gus Malzahn's fourth season at **UCF** would be his last. Despite a 3-0 start, the Knights missed a bowl game, and the program simply wasn't making progress during its Big 12 transition.

The Cowboys endured a nightmare season where all the issues from the prior year resurfaced. **Oklahoma State** had the worst defense in the conference and didn't have a winning quarterback on the roster, ultimately failing to win a single conference game just one year removed from a title appearance.

BIG 12 CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Sam Leavitt, ARIZONA STATE

OPOY: Sawyer Robertson, BAYLOR

DPOY: Jacob Rodriguez, TEXAS TECH

COACH OF THE YEAR: Joey McGuire, TEXAS TECH



Conner Weigman

Raquel Natalicchio / Houston Chronicle

1. ARIZONA STATE Kenny Dillingham and the Sun Devils have the momentum and returning core to propel themselves toward another Big 12 title. A major win for the program was keeping its underrated coaching staff intact.

2. TEXAS TECH Few teams invested as heavily for the 2025 season as Texas Tech. The Red Raiders hope their top-ranked transfer portal class will propel them to a breakout year and patch some of last season's holes.

3. BAYLOR Dave Aranda's squad looks to build on an outstanding late-season turnaround from 2024. Few teams can match the Bears' returning production this season as they aim for a more complete campaign.

4. KANSAS STATE The Wildcats have been a model of consistency in the Big 12 and will factor into the conference title race once again. In a transfer portal-driven landscape, Kansas State's focus on player development stands out.

5. UTAH The Utes' efforts to revamp their offense included importing many of the coaches and players responsible for New Mexico's explosive attack last season. They'll once again field a top-tier defense under Morgan Scalley, which gives them a significantly higher floor.

6. BYU There's a ton to like about the Cougars, including the high number of returning starters from both a top-tier defense and an excellent offense. They'll be strong in the trenches, but there are lingering questions about who will lead the offense in 2025.

7. IOWA STATE Matt Campbell's squad returns plenty of playmakers from last season's team but will be tasked with replacing two NFL-caliber WRs who carried much of the offensive load. The Cyclones' steady development under Campbell gives them a high floor this season.

8. TCU The Horned Frogs are set to feature one

of the Big 12's top offenses once again, with QB Josh Hoover leading a talented group of returners. Their season will hinge on how much improvement the defense shows under Andy Avalos in year two.

9. KANSAS Lance Leipold retooled the Jayhawks this offseason while keeping intact the elements that fueled their strong finish in November. Kansas continues to impress in talent acquisition, adding another solid layer of depth to the roster.

10. CINCINNATI There are far more positives for Cincinnati to build on this offseason than a year ago. The Bearcats became proficient in several key areas on both sides of the ball and will look to a promising cast of returners to make a leap in year two of the current system.

11. WEST VIRGINIA Rich Rodriguez initiated a full-scale overhaul of West Virginia's program, bringing in several key staffers and standout players from Jacksonville State. The Mountaineers should field a strong offense right away, but the defense will need marked improvement under Zac Alley to raise their ceiling.

12. COLORADO The Buffaloes must find ways to replace the immeasurable impact of their two departing stars. Shedeur Sanders and Travis Hunter were game-changers in every sense, and replacing their production will be a tall task.

13. HOUSTON The rebuild at Houston is a daunting one for Willie Fritz, but he managed to improve this roster in nearly every area during the offseason. If Conner Weigman can play at a high level, the Cougars could be dangerous.

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 23	KSU vs ISU
Sept. 20	ASU @ BAY
Sept. 20	TTU @ UTAH
Oct. 4	KSU @ BAY
Oct. 4	ISU @ CINC
Oct. 11	ISU @ COLO
Oct. 11	KU @ TTU
Oct. 11	TCU @ KSU
Oct. 18	TTU @ ASU
Oct. 18	UTAH @ BYU
Oct. 25	KSU @ KU
Nov. 1	ASU @ ISU
Nov. 1	TTU @ KSU
Nov. 22	KSU @ UTAH
Nov. 28	UA @ ASU

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (24)	TCU
2. (35)	KANSAS STATE
3. (37)	BAYLOR
4. (38)	COLORADO
5. (41)	BYU
6. (43)	UTAH
7. (44)	ARIZONA STATE
8. (48)	TEXAS TECH
9. (50)	ARIZONA
10. (52)	WEST VIRGINIA
11. (53)	HOUSTON
12. (54)	OKLAHOMA STATE
13. (55)	IOWA STATE
14. (61)	CINCINNATI
15. (73)	KANSAS
16. (85)	UCF

14. ARIZONA Brent Brennan shook up his staff and addressed the depth issues that plagued Arizona last season. The Wildcats have enough foundational talent to make this a relatively quick rebuild.

15. OKLAHOMA STATE The Cowboys' 2025 outlook is a complete mystery. Mike Gundy took an uncharacteristic approach by diving deep into the transfer portal, straying from his proven strategy of in-house development.

16. UCF Scott Frost returns to UCF aiming to deliver results quickly in year one. The Knights brought in a massive transfer class of 34 players, hoping the new faces can fuel a rapid turnaround.



ARIZONA STATE SUN DEVILS

HEAD COACH: Kenny Dillingham
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Marcus Arroyo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Ward

RANK: 11

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-3 (7-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: 7th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Peach Bowl

ARIZONA STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 2nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 8
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Shamari Sim-
mons, DL Jeff Clark, RB Cam
Skattebo, OOL Leif Fautanu

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jalen
Moss, OL Jimeto Obigbo, RB
Kanye Udoh, DB Kyndrich
Breedlove, DL MyKiel Gardner

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Marcus Arroyo and Kenny Dillingham are among the most creative minds in the sport, and they'll have plenty of weapons at their disposal this season.

QB Sam Leavitt dazzled in his first year as a starter and could be in for a major leap as a sophomore. Backup Jeff Sims struggled in his lone start last season, and if Leavitt were to miss time, the Sun Devils may turn to freshman Michael Tollefson.

Arizona State has a deep stable of RBs aiming to offset the loss of Cam Skattebo. Kyson and Raleek Brown both bring some production and familiarity with the system, but Army transfer Kanye Udoh could emerge as the best of the group after rushing for over 1,100 yards and 10 TDs for the Black Knights in 2024.



Jordyn Tyson

Sports Seriously

No returning WR in the Big 12 had a better season than Jordyn Tyson, who's back alongside the talented Malik McClain. The Sun Devils also added multiple exciting transfer portal targets and return starting TE Chamon Metayer.

Four of Arizona State's starting offensive linemen from 2024 return, but the departure of senior captain Leif Fautanu leaves a big hole. Fortunately, they found a monster replacement in transfer Jimeto Obigbo, who began his career at the FCS level and has worked his way up to the Sun Devils.

DEFENSE: Brian Ward's aggressive defensive playcalling paid huge dividends for the Sun Devils in 2024, and it should carry over into another stellar showing this season.

This D-line got after the QB last year, and Big 12 offenses will shudder at the return of Prince Dorbah, Elijah O'Neal, Jacob Rich Kongaika, and Clayton Smith—who combined for 15 sacks in 2024. They also bring back All-Big 12 defensive tackle C.J. Fite.

Senior leaders Keyshaun Elliott and Jordan Crook are back to anchor the LB corps, and Arizona State has a deep group of young players ready to step up.

All-Big 12 DB Xavion Alford returns alongside 2024 starters Javan Robinson and Myles Rowser. The Sun Devils also added highly coveted Purdue transfer Kyndrich Breedlove. This secondary made some much-needed improvements from last season.

OVERVIEW: In a conference as chaotic as the

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Northern Arizona
Sept. 6	@ Mississippi State
Sept. 13	Texas State
Sept. 20	@ Baylor
Sept. 26	TCU
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Utah
Oct. 18	Texas Tech
Oct. 25	Houston
Nov. 1	@ Iowa State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	West Virginia
Nov. 22	@ Colorado
Nov. 28	Arizona

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	88/100

Big 12, things can flip on a dime—but it's hard to ignore what's happening in Tempe.

Arizona State returns most of the key pieces that led them to a conference title in 2024, and their impressive portal additions only strengthen their case for a repeat.

The Sun Devils have undeniable momentum both on and off the field, but still have a few issues to address. Their pass defense was pedestrian at times last year, and losing Shemari Simmons could prove costly. They will play several opponents that can throw the ball well.

Additionally, the offense can come to a screeching halt without solid QB play, and there's not much proven depth behind Leavitt on the chart.

Still, Arizona State is fully capable of rising to their lofty expectations in 2025—and making a return trip to the College Football Playoff.

RECORD PREDICTION: 11-1 (8-1)

ARIZONA WILDCATS

HEAD COACH: Brent Brennan
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Seth Doege
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Danny Gonzales

RANK: 70



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (2-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 15th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

ARIZONA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1993

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 16th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Quali Con-
ley, WR Tetairoa McMillan, OL
Jonah Savaiinaea, LB Jacob
Manu, DB Tacario Davis

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Kris Hut-
son, OL Ka'ena Decambra, RB
Ismail Mahdi, DL Tiaoaalii Savea,
DB Jay'Vion Cole

OFFENSE: Arizona and Brent Brennan have turned to Seth Doege as their new offensive coordinator. The 36-year-old has just one season of experience in that role but is regarded as a promising young name in the coaching ranks.

Noah Fifita endured a drastic sophomore slump in 2024, looking like a far cry from the QB who helped lead Arizona to a 10-win season. He'll now attempt to rebound under a new offensive staff while adjusting to the loss of his top receiving weapon.

The Wildcats found a versatile asset in the transfer portal in Texas State RB Ismail Mahdi, a true Swiss army knife capable of making big plays as a runner, pass-catcher, and returner.

Arizona did well to offset the loss of Tetairoa



Noah Fifita

Arizona Athletics

McMillan through the portal, with Washington State WR Kris Hutson standing out as their prized addition. They also return the productive Chris Hunter and added another capable target in Luke Wyson from New Mexico. Additionally they return a steady option at TE with Sam Olson, who had 26 receptions in 2024.

The O-line struggled mightily in 2024, giving up 28 sacks and ranking near the bottom of the conference in rushing yards. Sophomores Alexander Doost and Rhino Tapa'toutai are the only returning starters, and the rest of the unit has been heavily retooled via the portal. Among the key additions is Ka'ena Decambra, a two-year starter at Hawaii.

DEFENSE: Danny Gonzales' defense put out an uninspired effort in 2024 despite inheriting some talented pieces from the previous regime.

Arizona's D-line returns senior Tre Smith, who appeared in every game last season, but much of the front will be rebuilt, bolstered by five transfer additions.

The Wildcats must replace most of their productive LBs from last season and are leaning on juniors Chase Kennedy and Taye Brown to step into starting roles. Like many other spots on this defense, they've added depth through the portal to ease the transition.

There were bright spots in the secondary last season, but the unit suffered some notable losses—especially standout DB Tacario Davis. Veteran safety Dalton Johnson returns, and San Jose State transfer Jay'Vion Cole should help stabilize the secondary as Arizona seeks

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Hawaii
Sept. 6	Weber State
Sept. 12	Kansas State
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ Iowa State
Oct. 4	Oklahoma State
Oct. 11	BYU
Oct. 18	@ Houston
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Colorado
Nov. 8	Kansas
Nov. 15	@ Cincinnati
Nov. 22	Baylor
Nov. 28	@ Arizona State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	67/100

improvement that could really help the rest of the defense out.

OVERVIEW: Even with several top contributors from their magical 2023 season returning, Arizona fell victim to inconsistency and a lack of depth last fall.

Brent Brennan made it a priority this offseason to address that depth and shake up his offensive staff. While the program did lose some key players—especially on defense—a fresh start may be just what this group needs after a frustrating year.

Doege brings a new voice as play-caller and could ignite this offense, particularly given the impressive playmakers added in the portal.

If the new pieces on offense click quickly and Gonzales can engineer a defensive turnaround, the Wildcats could re-enter the Big 12 title conversation sooner than expected.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-6)



BYU COUGARS

HEAD COACH: Kalani Sitake
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Aaron Roderick
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Hill

RANK: 34

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-2 (7-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: 13th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Alamo Bowl

BYU AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2007

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 45th

RETURNING STARTERS: 8 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Tyler Batty, DB Jakob Robinson, OL Caleb Etienne, WR Darrius Lassiter, DL Blake Mangelson

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Kyle Sfarcioc, TE Carsen Ryan, DL Keanu Tanuvasa, WR Lamason Waller III, OL Ethan Thomason

OFFENSE: BYU's offense didn't light up the scoreboard in 2024 but made key strides and returns several major playmakers this fall.

Senior QB Jake Retzlaff will again be the foundation of the Cougar attack. He showed flashes of brilliance last season but must cut down on turnovers to take the next step.

Starting RB LJ Martin looks to build on a solid 2024 campaign in which he rushed for 700 yards and 7 touchdowns. Sophomore Sione Moa also returns and appears poised for a larger role in the rotation.

Top WR Chase Roberts is back to headline the receiving corps, joined by returning contributor Jojo Phillips. BYU will need additional pass catchers to step up but is optimistic about Utah



Chase Roberts

Kristin Murphy / Deseret News

transfer TE Carsen Ryan's potential impact.

The offensive line is one of BYU's biggest strengths heading into 2025, with several starters and reserves returning from last year's group. Veterans like Bruce Mitchell and Austin Leausa provide a solid foundation. While a couple of projected starters are currently sidelined due to injury, the overall outlook remains very positive for this unit.

DEFENSE: Kalani Sitake delivered on his promise of a defensive turnaround in 2024, as the Cougars led the Big 12 in yards allowed. There are some key contributors to replace, but plenty of momentum to build upon.

Up front, the defensive line must replace multiple major pieces from last season. Utah transfer Keanu Tanuvasa, who started several games for the Utes, should help shore up the interior, while 2024 contributors Bodie Schoonover and Logan Lutui are expected to take on bigger roles.

The linebacker group will be a strength again, anchored by junior Isaiah Glasker and Jack Kelly, both of whom had strong seasons. There's also excitement around a group of rising underclassmen, including Siale Esera, Miles Hall, and Ace Kaufusi, who stood out this spring.

The biggest questions lie in the secondary, especially at corner. While experienced returners like Mory Bamba and Evan Johnson are back, depth and reliability behind them are uncertain. The Cougars didn't add much help via the portal, signaling confidence in their in-house options that they have available.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Portland State
Sept. 6	Stanford
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ East Carolina
Sept. 27	@ Colorado
Oct. 3	West Virginia
Oct. 11	@ Arizona
Oct. 18	Utah
Oct. 25	@ Iowa State
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Texas Tech
Nov. 15	TCU
Nov. 22	@ Cincinnati
Nov. 29	UCF

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	84/100

OVERVIEW: BYU's transformation into a Big 12 title contender was one of 2024's biggest surprises. With a high number of returning starters and coaching continuity, the Cougars look poised to make another serious run.

The focus this offseason has been on defense, where there are holes to patch, especially on the D-line and in the secondary. Still, Kalani Sitake and defensive coordinator Jay Hill have shown they can develop talent quickly in those areas.

Offensively, BYU brings back its top QB, RB, WR, and most of the offensive line—providing a strong foundation for another productive season.

The Cougars silenced doubts about their ability to compete at a high level in the Big 12 last year. With their window still wide open, 2025 presents another real shot at bringing home a conference crown.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)

BAYLOR BEARS

HEAD COACH: Dave Aranda
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jake Spavital
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Powledge

RANK: 22



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (6-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Texas Bowl

BAYLOR AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2021

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 11th

RETURNING STARTERS: 9 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Kaian Roberts-Day, DB Isaiah Dunson, DL Trey Wilson, OL Alvin Ebosele, DL Brendan Bett

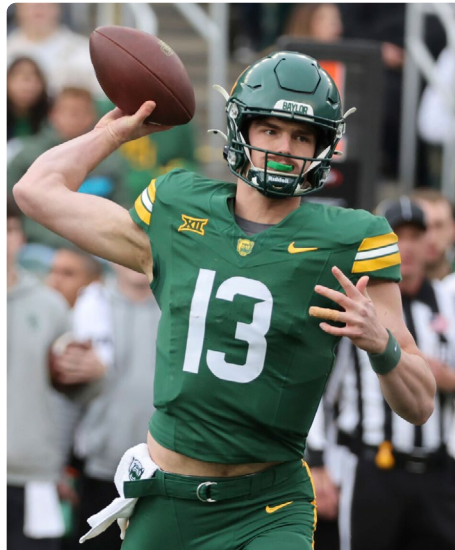
KEY ADDITIONS: WR Kobe Prentice, LB Emar'ion Winston, DB Devin Turner, WR Taz Williams Jr., LB Travion Barnes

OFFENSE: The Baylor offense is set up for another explosive year, returning nine starters from a unit that thrived in Jake Spavital's first season as offensive coordinator.

Senior QB Sawyer Robertson enters 2025 as one of the hottest passers in the country, having caught fire late last year. Behind him, freshman transfer Walker White arrives as a promising backup and potential quarterback of the future.

The backfield is among the Big 12's best, with 1,000-yard rusher Bryson Washington and productive backup Dawson Pendergrass both returning. Together, they form one of the most proven and dangerous RB duos in the league.

Top pass catchers Josh Cameron and Ashtyn Hawkins return, as does standout TE Michael



Sawyer Robertson

Rod Aydelotte / Waco Tribune-Herald

Trigg. The addition of Alabama transfer Kobe Prentice only strengthens what was already one of the deepest WR rooms in the conference.

The Bears also bring back four starting offensive linemen, and should once again be strong up front. All-Big 12 lineman Omar Aigbedion anchors the unit and will serve as one of the team's emotional and physical leaders.

DEFENSE: Dave Aranda and defensive coordinator Matt Powledge sparked noticeable improvement on defense last season, though the unit still fell short of the elite standard set by Aranda's earlier Baylor teams.

Up front, the D-line returns starting tackle Cooper Lanz and DE Jackie Marshall, two players who made strides in 2024. While a few key contributors moved on, the Bears used the transfer portal to patch several gaps in the rotation.

All-Big 12 LB Keaton Thomas returns to lead a linebacker group full of new faces. Among the most notable additions is former Oregon LB Emar'ion Winston, one of nearly half a dozen portal additions expected to compete for playing time.

Pass defense was a glaring weakness in 2024, as Baylor finished 11th in the Big 12 in passing yards allowed. Veterans Devyn Bobby and Tevin Williams III return to the secondary, but the staff is hoping that new blood can provide a boost on the back end.

OVERVIEW: At 2-4 in mid-October, Dave Aranda looked like a coach on the brink, facing a third straight losing season and mounting

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Auburn
Sept. 6	@ SMU
Sept. 13	Samford
Sept. 20	Arizona State
Sept. 27	@ Oklahoma State
Oct. 4	Kansas State
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ TCU
Oct. 25	@ Cincinnati
Nov. 1	UCF
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Utah
Nov. 22	@ Arizona
Nov. 29	Houston

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	85/100

pressure. But a stunning six-game winning streak down the stretch—fueled by an offensive surge—completely flipped the narrative entering 2025.

With 15 returning starters and continuity on both sides of the ball, the Bears are well-positioned to build on that late-season momentum.

Defense still needs to take a step forward, particularly in limiting explosive plays, but given Aranda's track record, a full turnaround isn't out of the question.

The schedule gives Baylor plenty of early chances to make noise, with marquee games against Auburn, SMU, and Arizona State all before October.

Baylor showed in 2024 that it has the talent and coaching to contend for a Big 12 title. If the Bears can put all the pieces together, 2025 could be the year they finally make the leap.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (7-2)



CINCINNATI BEARCATS

HEAD COACH: Scott Satterfield
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brad Glenn
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tyson Veidt

RANK: 50

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

CINCINNATI AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 12th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL John Williams,
OL Luke Kandra, RB Corey Kiner,
LB Jared Bartlett, DB Josh Minkins

KEY ADDITIONS: DL CJ McCray,
OL Taran Tyo, RB Tawee Walker,
WR Cyrus Allen, WR Jeff Caldwell,
WR Caleb Goodie

OFFENSE: Cincinnati's offense found some much-needed stability in 2024, and with Brad Glenn entering his third season as offensive coordinator, the future looks promising.

Returning starting QB Brendan Sorsby is a major asset for the Bearcats. He delivered a strong campaign last season and left no doubt about being the quarterback of the future.

A huge portal win came in the form of RB Tawee Walker, who led Wisconsin in rushing in 2024. He joins a backfield that also returns Evan Pryor, who will play a key role as Cincinnati looks to replace longtime standout Corey Kiner.

The wide receiver room has undergone a complete makeover, with All-Big 12 TE Joe



Dontay Corleone

Cincinnati Athletics

Royer standing as the lone familiar face among pass catchers. Four new receivers arrived via the portal, with Jeff Caldwell—who went over 1,000 yards at Lindenwood—and Caleb Goodie bringing the most experience.

On the offensive line, only center Gavin Gerhardt and tackle Deondre Buford return. The unit will rely heavily on newcomers like Ball State transfer Taran Tyo to help retool the trenches.

DEFENSE: Tyson Veidt's first year as defensive coordinator was a success, as he helped engineer a fast turnaround for a previously underperforming unit.

Star DT Dontay Corleone anchors the D-line and is one of the most dominant interior defenders in the country. The pass rush should be improved this season with the additions of CJ McCray and Jaylon White-McClain, fitting Veidt's emphasis on creating pressure.

Replacing LB Jared Bartlett will be no small task, but the Bearcats have returning contributors ready to step up. Jake Golday, Jonathan Thompson, and Jack Dingle each logged meaningful snaps last season and will be counted on for more in 2025.

The biggest turnover came in the secondary, where Cincinnati lost multiple starters. In response, they turned to the Group of Five ranks, bringing in standout DBs like All-Sun Belt selection Matthew McDoom and Middle Tennessee's Xavier Williams. Underclassmen Jiquan Sanks and Willie Goodwyn will also get a shot to earn starting roles. These additions will give them the

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Nebraska
Sept. 6	Bowling Green
Sept. 13	Northwestern State
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ Kansas
Oct. 4	Iowa State
Oct. 11	UCF
Oct. 18	@ Oklahoma State
Oct. 25	Baylor
Nov. 1	@ Utah
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Arizona
Nov. 22	BYU
Nov. 29	@ TCU

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	74/100

opportunity to replicate their success defending the pass from last season.

OVERVIEW: Scott Satterfield's second season at Cincinnati showed promising progress, and there's reason to believe 2025 could bring even more success.

The Bearcats return several high-level contributors and appear to have filled most of their roster gaps through the portal. That said, both the WR room and secondary underwent major overhauls, and whether those fixes will hold up over the course of a full season remains to be seen. This will be a critical season that determines what Satterfield's future with Cincinnati looks like.

With an experienced quarterback, key returning playmakers, and momentum on both sides of the ball, year three could be a defining season for Satterfield—and so far, the trajectory looks encouraging.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-5)

COLORADO BUFFALOES

HEAD COACH: Deion Sanders
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pat Shurmur
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robert Livingston

RANK: 57



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (7-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: 25th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Alamo Bowl

COLORADO AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2001

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 89th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Shedeur
Sanders, DB Travis Hunter, WR
Jimmy Horn Jr., DL BJ Green,
WR LaJohntay Wester

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Jehiem Oa-
tis, DB Tawfiq Byard, QB Julian
Lewis, QB Kaidon Salter, TE
Zach Atkins

OFFENSE: Pat Shurmur brought some life to Colorado's offense in 2024, but the Buffaloes remained one of the most one-dimensional attacks in the country. With NFL-bound Shedeur Sanders now gone, the door is open for a more balanced approach in 2025.

Kaidon Salter, a highly productive transfer from Liberty, appears to be the frontrunner to take over at QB. Freshman Julian Lewis has also generated major buzz and is poised to be the program's quarterback of the future. Both QBs have an ability to run the football that is virtually required given Colorado's recent O-line play.

Colorado returns several weapons that could help shift the offensive identity. Sophomore RB Micah Welch is a breakout candidate, and former Ohio State transfer Dallan Hayden hopes to



Jordan Seaton

Colorado Athletics

rebound after a quiet debut season in Boulder.

The receiving corps takes a hit with the departure of its top three pass catchers from last year. However, Omarion Miller—who showed flashes before an injury ended his season—returns as a potential No. 1 target. Tulsa transfer Joseph Williams brings proven production and should contribute immediately.

Colorado's O-line was a major issue in 2024, allowing 43 sacks and helping produce fewer than 1,000 rushing yards on the year. Jordan Seaton is the only returning starter, as the Buffaloes once again turned to the portal to try to patch this ongoing weakness.

DEFENSE: Robert Livingston's impact on the defense was immediate in his first year as coordinator, helping Colorado become a gritty, disruptive unit that kept the team alive in the Big 12 race.

The D-line loses some key contributors, but Samuel Okunlola and Arden Walker return after productive seasons rushing the passer. The Buffaloes were strong against the run, and the portal additions of Jehiem Oatis and Gavriel Lightfoot should help maintain that edge.

At LB, Colorado reloaded with proven Group of Five transfers Reginald Hughes and Martavius French. Both have starting experience and are expected to step in right away.

Replacing Travis Hunter in the secondary is no easy task, and it looms large heading into the fall. That said, the Buffaloes aren't short on talent in the defensive backfield—Preston Hodge,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Georgia Tech
Sept. 6	Delaware
Sept. 12	@ Houston
Sept. 20	Wyoming
Sept. 27	BYU
Oct. 4	@ TCU
Oct. 11	Iowa State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Utah
Nov. 1	Arizona
Nov. 8	@ West Virginia
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	Arizona State
Nov. 29	@ Kansas State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	73/100

Colton Hood, and Middle Tennessee transfer Tawfiq Byard form a trio capable of keeping this group competitive.

OVERVIEW: Deion Sanders remains at the helm in Boulder, but 2024 marked the end of a defining chapter for Colorado football. With Shedeur Sanders and Travis Hunter moving on—and honored with jersey retirements in the spring—the Buffaloes are entering a new era.

Sanders is still utilizing the transfer portal, though more strategically, focusing on targeting specific positions rather than wholesale turnover. This offseason, that meant rebuilding the offensive line and filling gaps across all three levels of the defense.

Matching last season's success will be a tall task given the star power lost, but Colorado isn't taking a big step back. The Buffaloes have embraced another fast-paced reload, and they'll remain a tough out for anyone in Big 12 play.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-5)



HOUSTON COUGARS

HEAD COACH: Willie Fritz
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Slade Nagle
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Austin Armstrong

RANK: 59

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (3-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

HOUSTON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2015

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 23rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Donovan
Smith, TE Maliq Carr, DL Keith
Cooper Jr., LB Michael Batton

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Conner
Weigman, WR Amare Thomas,
OL McKenzie Agnello, RB Dean
Connors, DL Khalil Laufau, DL
Joshua Donald, DB CJ Douglas

OFFENSE: Willie Fritz reunites with offensive coordinator Slade Nagle this season, bringing in his longtime assistant from their days together at Tulane. Nagle's familiarity with Fritz's system could help jumpstart a Houston offense that was among the worst in the Big 12 last year.

The Cougars made a splash in the portal with the addition of former five-star QB Conner Weigman from Texas A&M. While injuries and inconsistency have plagued his career, the hope is that a fresh start in Houston can unlock his potential. Returning QB Zeon Chriss, who made a few starts last season, gives the Cougars a capable backup option.

Houston also retooled its RB room with the addition of Rice transfer Dean Connors, a productive runner in 2024. He joins returning backs



Carlos Allen Jr.

Houston Athletics

Re'Shaun Sanford II and Stacy Sneed—both of whom flashed at times last year, though neither eclipsed 500 rushing yards.

The passing game needed upgrades after no Houston receiver cracked 500 yards in 2024. Leading returner Stephon Johnson is joined by impact transfers like UAB's Amare Thomas and Louisiana's Harvey Broussard III. At tight end, Luke McGary adds another capable receiving target.

The offensive line has been overhauled again, with four projected starters coming in from Power Five programs. Cal transfer Matthew Wykoff and Oklahoma State's Jason Brooks Jr. are among the key additions tasked with improving protection and run blocking.

DEFENSE: While Houston struggled overall in 2024, the defense quietly laid the groundwork for a more competitive team. Willie Fritz's defensive reputation was evident, and the addition of new defensive coordinator Austin Armstrong gives this unit even more upside in 2025.

The D-line was a strength last season and could be again, led by Carlos Allen Jr. and Brandon Mack II. Both are senior leaders capable of anchoring a disruptive front.

At linebacker, the Cougars must replace several key players, but they've turned to the portal for reinforcements. Louisiana transfer Carmycal Glass is a rising star, and he'll line up alongside returning starter Jalen Garner for what should be a unit that takes a step forward.

The secondary is a bit of a wild card. Lead-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Stephen F. Austin
Sept. 6	@ Rice
Sept. 12	Colorado
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 26	@ Oregon State
Oct. 4	Texas Tech
Oct. 11	@ Oklahoma State
Oct. 18	Arizona
Oct. 25	@ Arizona State
Nov. 1	West Virginia
Nov. 7	@ UCF
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	TCU
Nov. 29	@ Baylor

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	71/100

ership and continuity are lacking, but transfer additions CJ Douglas and Keionte Scott bring valuable starting experience that could help stabilize the group.

OVERVIEW: Houston's first season under Willie Fritz was full of turbulence but not without silver linings. Despite missing out on a bowl, the Cougars' defensive identity started to take shape.

Offense remains the biggest concern, and Fritz's response was decisive—bringing in Slade Nagle and reshaping the roster at QB, WR, and along the offensive line. Those changes may take time to gel, but the talent infusion is obvious.

Losing All-Big 12 DB A.J. Haulcy stings, but if the defense continues trending up and the offense takes a meaningful step forward, Houston could exceed expectations. In a wide-open Big 12, the Cougars may be better positioned than most realize to make a jump in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-6)

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

HEAD COACH: Matt Campbell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Taylor Mouser
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jon Heacock

RANK: 39



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-3 (7-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: 15th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Pop-Tarts Bowl

IOWA STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1912

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 55th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Jaylin Noel,
WR Jayden Higgins, TE Stevo
Klotz, OL Jarrod Hufford, DB
Myles Purchase

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Chase
Sowell, DL Vontroy Malone, DL
Cannon Butler, DB Tre Bell, WR
Xavier Townsend

OFFENSE: Iowa State's balanced and steady offensive attack will face a major test in 2025, needing to replace multiple NFL-caliber contributors—particularly in the pass-catching department. Offensive coordinator Taylor Mouser has his work cut out for him.

Rocco Becht has progressed each year under center and now faces his toughest challenge without the proven targets he's had his entire career. He's shown poise and decision-making growth, and this season will be a key step in his development as a high-end Big 12 QB.

The ground game will once again be a key strength, with Carson Hansen and Abu Sama III both returning after combining for over 1,500 rushing yards last fall. Their ability to control the tempo and sustain drives will be critical.



Rocco Becht

Jerome Miron / Imagn Images

To fill the void left by a pair of NFL WRs, Iowa State dipped into the portal. Chase Sowell brings speed and production from East Carolina, and UCF transfer Xavier Townsend has the versatility to contribute in multiple roles. With question marks at WR, it's likely that Becht will lean more heavily on TEs Gabe Burkle and Tyler Moore, both of whom are capable in short-yardage and red zone situations.

Up front, Iowa State returns three starters on the offensive line, including long-time tackle Tyler Miller. The unit has been consistent in recent seasons, and continuity in the trenches gives the Cyclones a reliable foundation to work from.

DEFENSE: Jon Heacock's defense was a statistical oddity in 2024—boasting the Big 12's best pass defense while simultaneously finishing last against the run. Fixing that imbalance will be a top priority, and there's optimism that growth in the front seven will get them back to form.

Though Iowa State rarely leans on the portal, they made a pair of targeted additions to the D-line in Vontroy Malone and Cannon Butler. Both dominated at lower levels and now step into roles where they'll be expected to contribute immediately in a more physical league.

At linebacker, Kooper Ebel and Jack Sadowsky V return to anchor the middle of the defense. Ebel in particular emerged as a high-IQ leader last season, and both players have another offseason under their belts to improve in run support and gap discipline.

The secondary lost a few experienced pieces

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	Kansas State
Aug. 30	South Dakota
Sept. 6	Iowa
Sept. 13	@ Arkansas State
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Arizona
Oct. 4	@ Cincinnati
Oct. 11	@ Colorado
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	BYU
Nov. 1	Arizona State
Nov. 8	@ TCU
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	Kansas
Nov. 29	@ Oklahoma State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	80/100

but returns plenty of talent, led by All-Big 12 standout Jontez Williams. Jamison Patton and Jeremiah Cooper also return after strong 2024 campaigns, and Iowa State's track record of DB development suggests this unit will remain a strength.

OVERVIEW: Iowa State's team of destiny fell just short of a Big 12 title in 2024, but still produced the first 11-win season in school history and ended the season with a dominant bowl victory.

The Cyclones lost a significant amount of talent—four players were drafted and five more signed as undrafted free agents—but it's a testament to the developmental success under Matt Campbell.

Despite those departures, Iowa State saw minimal transfer portal churn. That continuity gives the Cyclones a key edge as they aim for another high-level season.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)



KANSAS JAYHAWKS

HEAD COACH: Lance Leipold
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Zebrowski, Matt Lubick
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: D. K. McDonald

RANK: 43

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (4-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

KANSAS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1968

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 76th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Devin Neal,
DB Cobee Bryant, DB Mello
Dotson, OL Logan Brown

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Leshon
Williams, DL Justice Finkley,
DB DJ Graham II, LB Bangally
Kamara, WR Bryson Canty, WR
Emmanuel Henderson Jr.

OFFENSE: Kansas endured some offensive turbulence in 2024 but emerged with clarity, naming Jim Zebrowski as the offensive coordinator of the future. The Jayhawks closed the season on a high note, showing signs of a unit that had finally found its rhythm—momentum they hope to carry into 2025.

Veteran QB Jalon Daniels returns for his senior year after a challenging 2024 marked by inconsistency and injuries. Kansas is placing a lot of trust in Daniels bouncing back, as there's limited experience behind him on the depth chart.

To help offset the loss of Devin Neal, the Jayhawks turned to Iowa transfer Leshon Williams, who ran for 800 yards in 2023 before missing most of last season. He'll pair with Daniel Hishaw Jr., giving Kansas a veteran duo with



Jalon Daniels

Charlie Riedel / AP

real upside in the backfield.

The wide receiver group has been significantly retooled, with productive transfers Bryson Canty and Cam Pickett bringing experience. However, Alabama transfer Emmanuel Henderson Jr. has generated the most buzz and could emerge as the go-to target for Daniels this fall.

Up front, Kansas must replace most of its O-line, with only center Bryce Foster and guard Kobe Barnes returning. It's a tall task, but the addition of Utah transfer Tavake Tuikolovatu provides immediate help as the unit works to establish chemistry.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator D. K. McDonald has a solid foundation to build upon after the defense showed flashes of improvement late in 2024, even if the season overall fell short of expectations.

The defensive line should be a strength, headlined by Dean Miller's return and a strong interior rotation that includes Tommy Dunn Jr. and D. J. Withers. Former four-star Texas DL Justice Finkley joins the mix and could be a breakout candidate with an expanded role.

Linebacker is a completely retooled position group, but there's no shortage of experience. Bangally Kamara arrives after a productive run at Pitt, Joseph Sipp Jr. posted big numbers at Bowling Green, and Trey Lathan contributed for West Virginia. It's a high-upside group that could surprise if it gels quickly.

The biggest concern lies in the secondary, where Kansas must replace two All-Big 12 per-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Fresno State
Sept. 6	Wagner
Sept. 13	@ Missouri
Sept. 20	West Virginia
Sept. 27	Cincinnati
Oct. 4	@ UCF
Oct. 11	@ Texas Tech
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	Kansas State
Nov. 1	Oklahoma State
Nov. 8	@ Arizona
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	@ Iowa State
Nov. 28	Utah

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	78/100

formers. The Jayhawks added several transfers to fill the void. Fortunately, safety Taylor Davis returns and provides some much-needed continuity on the back end.

OVERVIEW: Lance Leipold had steadily improved Kansas year-over-year until 2024, when the Jayhawks fell short of expectations and missed a bowl game. Now they enter a pivotal season in 2025.

There's more confidence in the staff, particularly on offense, where the pieces seemed to click late last year. Still, Kansas must replace major production at running back, receiver, and across the secondary.

The key for 2025 will be rediscovering a winning identity earlier in the season. If that happens, the Jayhawks are well positioned to bounce back and reach their third bowl game in four years—something the program hasn't accomplished since 2008.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-6)

KANSAS STATE WILDCATS

HEAD COACH: Chris Klieman
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Wells
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Klanderman

RANK: 24



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (5-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the
Rate Bowl

KANSAS STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2022

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 56th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 6 defensive

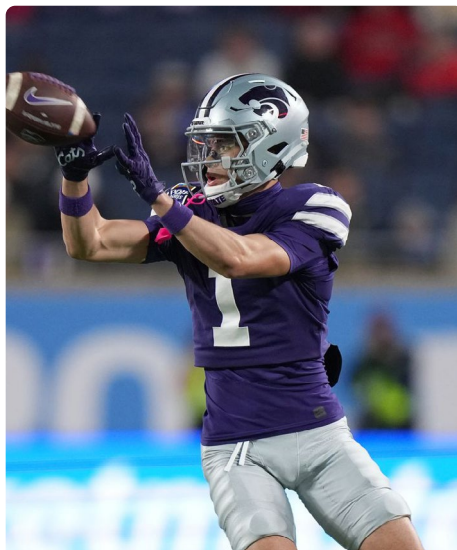
KEY LOSSES: RB DJ Giddens,
DB Marques Sigle, OL Easton
Kilty, K Chris Tennant, LB Aus-
tin Moore, DL Brendan Mott

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jerand
Bradley, LB Gabe Powers, OL
Amos Talalele, OL George Fitz-
patrick, DB Gunner Maldonado

OFFENSE: Despite offseason concern over losing offensive coordinator Collin Klein, Matt Wells took the reins and led a dynamic Kansas State offense in 2024. Now, with another year of growth and stability, expectations for this group are even higher.

Avery Johnson impressed in his first full year as the starting QB, showcasing elite athleticism and command of the offense. If he sharpens his accuracy in the passing game, he could vault into national stardom as a junior.

With DJ Giddens gone, the backfield now belongs to Dylan Edwards. The electric transfer showed flashes last year and is poised to emerge as one of the Big 12's best RBs in a featured role. Joe Jackson could also emerge in this backfield after a potent freshman year.



Jayce Brown

Kansas State Athletics

WR Jayce Brown returns after a breakout sophomore campaign and will again be Johnson's top target. The Wildcats also added two productive portal receivers—Jerand Bradley from Texas Tech and Jaron Tibbs from Purdue—while TE Garrett Oakley is back after catching five touchdowns in 2024.

Kansas State continues to set the standard for O-line play in the Big 12. The Wildcats return key leaders like center Sam Hect and veteran Taylor Poirier, and the system in place consistently produces strong results in both pass protection and run blocking.

DEFENSE: Joe Klanderman's unit turned in another reliable season in 2024, holding opponents under 30 points in all but two games. The Wildcats again figure to be stout on this side of the ball.

The D-line takes a hit with the loss of its top pass rusher, but veterans Chiddi Obiazor and Cody Stufflebean provide a strong foundation. Kansas State's depth here remains a strength, with several experienced rotational players ready to contribute.

At linebacker, All-Big 12 standout Austin Romaine returns alongside Desmond Purnell, anchoring the middle of the defense. Ohio State transfer Gabe Powers, a former four-star recruit, brings more upside to an already solid group.

The secondary had some inconsistent moments last season and enters 2025 as the biggest question mark. Still, safety VJ Payne is back, and transfers Gunner Maldonado (Arizona) and Amariyon Fortenberry (South Alabama) bring

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	Iowa State
Aug. 30	North Dakota
Sept. 6	Army
Sept. 12	@ Arizona
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	UCF
Oct. 4	@ Baylor
Oct. 11	TCU
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Kansas
Nov. 1	Texas Tech
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Oklahoma State
Nov. 22	@ Utah
Nov. 29	Colorado

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	85/100

starting experience and versatility to the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: Kansas State has remained in the Big 12 title mix each of the past four seasons, and there's little reason to believe that streak ends in 2025. Chris Klieman has built one of the most stable and complete programs in the country.

Managing the transition away from Collin Klein last year was no small task, but the offense didn't miss a beat. With a seasoned QB, explosive weapons, and a top-tier O-line, the Wildcats have the firepower to compete with anyone.

If the rebuilt secondary holds up, Kansas State could once again be playing for a conference crown—and potentially more. Kansas State opens their season with two games in August, but their hope is to be playing football games well into January.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (7-2)



OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS

HEAD COACH: Mike Gundy
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Meacham
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Grantham

RANK: 76

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (0-9)

CONFERENCE RANK: 16th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

OKLAHOMA STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2011

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 104th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Nick Martin,
DB Korie Black, RB Ollie Gordon
II, DL Collin Oliver

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jaylen
Lloyd, WR Christian Fitzpatrick,
DL Kyran Duhon, LB Bryan Mc-
Coy, OL Tyler Brumfield

OFFENSE: Mike Gundy made a bold move this offseason by hiring Doug Meacham as offensive coordinator, hoping his track record developing wideouts at TCU will translate into a much-needed spark in Stillwater.

The QB competition is ongoing, but more stable than in recent years. Sophomore Zane Flores has the edge in terms of continuity, having been developed within the program, while true freshman Hauss Hejny brings dynamic rushing ability that could fit well with Meacham's scheme.

Oklahoma State's run game hit rock bottom in 2024, and the backfield will lean on a committee to find production. Returners Trent Howland and Sesi Vailahi didn't find much success last season, but Rodney Fields Jr. and Oklahoma transfer Kalib Hicks provide hope for a reset at



Josh Ford

247 Sports

the position that the offense is in dire need of.

At receiver, there's a near-total reset. TE Josh Ford is the only reliable returning pass catcher. Marshall transfer Christian Fitzpatrick brings experience and size, while Nebraska transfer Jaylen Lloyd arrives with high-end speed and upside, though both are largely unproven at this level.

The offensive line was completely overhauled after a disastrous 2024 campaign. The Cowboys hit the portal hard, bringing in JUCO All-American Tyler Brumfield and experienced G5 players like Lavaka Taukeiaho and Kasen Carpenter in hopes of stabilizing the trenches.

DEFENSE: Oklahoma State raised eyebrows by hiring longtime NFL assistant Todd Grantham as defensive coordinator, luring him away from the New Orleans Saints. Grantham hasn't coordinated at the college level since 2021, but brings name recognition and a D-line focus.

UTEP transfer Kyran Duhon, who recorded seven sacks last year, headlines a wave of portal additions up front. The Cowboys are banking on sheer volume to rebuild a unit that lacked bite in 2024.

Linebacker Jaleel Johnson is the lone holdover in the middle of the defense. He'll be joined by Akron transfer Bryan McCoy, a tackling machine with over 200 career stops, and several new faces trying to bring stability to the second level.

The secondary is the most intact part of this defense, returning Cam and Dylan Smith,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	UT Martin
Sept. 6	@ Oregon
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 19	Tulsa
Sept. 27	Baylor
Oct. 4	@ Arizona
Oct. 11	Houston
Oct. 18	Cincinnati
Oct. 25	@ Texas Tech
Nov. 1	@ Kansas
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Kansas State
Nov. 22	@ UCF
Nov. 29	Iowa State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	65/100

along with Parker Robinson. Still, the Cowboys supplemented heavily here too, adding players like Charlotte transfer Mordecai McDaniel to increase competition and depth.

OVERVIEW: Oklahoma State brought in a staggering 36 players from the transfer portal—an uncharacteristically aggressive approach for a program that has long prided itself on development and retention.

After finishing with the worst record of the Mike Gundy era, the sweeping changes make sense, even if they come with growing pains. Both coordinator hires are gambles, and neither brings recent coordinator-level success, raising the stakes even higher.

Whether this overhaul can return the Cowboys to relevance remains to be seen, but it's clear that Gundy knows the pressure is on. If things don't trend upward in 2025, the conversation around his future in Stillwater could start to shift.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-7)

TCU HORNERD FROGS

HEAD COACH: Sonny Dykes
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kendal Briles, A. J. Ricker
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Andy Avalos

RANK: 41



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (6-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the New Mexico Bowl

TCU AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2014

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 49th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Jack Bech, WR Savion Williams, OL Blake Harris, LB Johnny Hodges, DB LaMareon James

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jordan Dwyer, WR Joseph Manjack IV, DL Ansel Din-Mbuh, DB Elijah Jackson, OL Rasheed Jackson

OFFENSE: Sonny Dykes and Kendall Briles have firmly established themselves among the nation's premier offensive minds. TCU finished third in the Big 12 in scoring last season and returns much of the firepower needed to keep that momentum going in 2025.

Josh Hoover gives the Horned Frogs continuity at QB. He was one of the top returning passers in the country statistically, and while he's already shown the ability to stretch defenses, cutting down on his 20 career interceptions will be a key point of growth.

The ground game wasn't a central focus in 2024, but the RBs remained active in the passing game. Jeremy Payne returns after leading the backfield in receiving, while Trent Battle—who logged more carries last season—appears



Josh Hoover

TCU Athletics

poised to take over lead back duties.

Even after losing two WRs to the NFL Draft, the Horned Frogs remain loaded at the position. Boise State transfer Eric McAlister is expected to become a go-to weapon after a huge 2024, and the addition of Houston's Joseph Manjack IV adds another versatile piece to the puzzle.

Up front, TCU brings back a seasoned group led by center Coltin Deery. This line should again be one of the Big 12's best, with Ryan Hughes and other younger players ready to step into rotational roles after gaining valuable reps last year.

DEFENSE: Andy Avalos enters his second year coordinating the defense with a goal of taking this group from solid to dependable. While there were flashes in 2024, consistency—particularly in critical moments—remains elusive.

The D-line will be young but talented. Sophomores Markis Deal and Zachary Chapman will anchor the front, while Washington State transfer Ansel Din-Mbuh adds much-needed experience and pass rush production after recording six sacks last season.

TCU will feel more confident at LB, where Namdi Obiazor and Kaleb Elarms-Orr return as vocal leaders and productive playmakers. This group will be counted on to clean up a number of breakdowns that plagued the middle of the defense last fall. This is another area where the Horned Frogs will hope to get an effective pass rush this season.

The secondary remains the strength of this unit.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Sept. 1	@ North Carolina
Sept. 6	BYE
Sept. 13	Abilene Christian
Sept. 20	SMU
Sept. 26	@ Arizona State
Oct. 4	Colorado
Oct. 11	@ Kansas State
Oct. 18	Baylor
Oct. 25	@ West Virginia
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Iowa State
Nov. 15	@ BYU
Nov. 22	@ Houston
Nov. 29	Cincinnati

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	77/100

All-Big 12 standout Bud Clark is back, joined by the steady Jamel Johnson and the ascending Channing Canada. This trio gives TCU a dependable foundation in the secondary and should help mask some growing pains up front.

OVERVIEW: TCU salvaged a rocky start in 2024 by finishing with nine wins, showing both resolve and upside along the way. With a stable QB, deep WR room, and one of the Big 12's most experienced O-lines, the offense should remain one of the league's most dangerous.

The big question lies on defense, where Avalos must patch up the unit's worst flaws. If the young talent up front develops quickly and the secondary continues to shine, TCU could become a legitimate conference contender once again.

September brings a steep challenge early, but the Horned Frogs have the pieces to turn heads right away.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)



TEXAS TECH RED RAIDERS

HEAD COACH: Joey McGuire
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mack Leftwich
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shiel Wood

RANK: 14

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (6-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Liberty Bowl

TEXAS TECH AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1994

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 4th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Tahj Brooks, OL Caleb Rogers, TE Jalin Conyers, WR Josh Kelly, DB C. J. Baskerville

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Quinten Joyner, OL Hunter Zambrano, EDGE Romello Height, LB Brice Pollock, DL David Bailey

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Mack Leftwich returns with the task of replicating Texas Tech's explosive attack from last season. The Red Raiders averaged a scorching 462 yards per game in 2024 and finished among the nation's top four in points scored per contest.

Behren Morton will look to build on a productive sophomore campaign as the starting QB. The Red Raiders also boast a deep quarterback room with Will Hammond and Wake Forest transfer Mitch Griffis, both of whom bring solid starting experience to the table.

Texas Tech added a major boost to their backfield by landing sophomore transfer Quinten Joyner from USC, who averaged an eye-popping seven-plus yards per carry last season. He'll be complemented by returning rushers



Jacob Rodriguez

Justin Apodaca / Dallas Morning News

J'Koby Williams and Cameron Dickey.

The passing attack remains the centerpiece of this offense, fueled by a deep and experienced receiver corps. Caleb Douglas and Coy Eakin return as proven targets, while new addition Reggie Virgil—an All-MAC performer in 2024—injects depth to an already dangerous group.

Up front, the interior line returns intact with Sheridan Wilson, Vinny Sciury, and Davion Carter anchoring the trenches. The addition of tackles Howard Sampson and Hunter Zambrano not only fills key gaps but elevates the overall depth and physicality of the unit.

DEFENSE: After finishing near the bottom nationally on defense in 2024, Texas Tech made a move by hiring Shiel Wood away from Houston to serve as defensive coordinator. Wood brings a proven track record of crafting aggressive, disruptive defenses and now faces the challenge of flipping the defensive narrative in Lubbock.

The Red Raiders have hit the reset button on the D-line, adding highly touted transfer portal talents to fortify the front. Stanford standout David Bailey, UCF anchor Lee Hunter, and Georgia Tech star Romello Height represent a talented, physical group expected to make an immediate impact.

LB continuity is a strength for this defense, with All-Big 12 performer Jacob Rodriguez and veteran Ben Roberts leading a unit that will be tasked with anchoring the second level.

The secondary was not completely overhauled

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Arkansas-Pine Bluff
Sept. 6	Kent State
Sept. 13	Oregon State
Sept. 20	@ Utah
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Houston
Oct. 11	Kansas
Oct. 18	@ Arizona State
Oct. 25	Oklahoma State
Nov. 1	@ Kansas State
Nov. 8	BYU
Nov. 15	UCF
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 29	@ West Virginia

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	87/100

but received key additions to complement returners Maurion Horn and Chapman Lewis. One standout newcomer is Mississippi State transfer Brice Pollock, who adds versatility and playmaking ability.

OVERVIEW: No team had a bigger gap between their defensive and offensive performance in 2024 than Texas Tech. Credit to the Red Raiders, they took their defensive overhaul seriously, and invested heavily in the portal.

Joey McGuire has had the Red Raiders in a steady position for each of his three seasons leading the charge, but they've fallen short of the high bar they set for themselves. Serious changes to the defensive staff and, and a surplus of successful transfer portal acquisitions have the expectations high in Lubbock again.

If their outstanding offense can have an encore season, and the new defensive pieces live up to the hype, a Big 12 title is within reach.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-3)

UCF KNIGHTS

HEAD COACH: Scott Frost
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Cooper
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Alex Grinch

RANK: 87



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (2-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 14th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UCF AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2018

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 106th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB BJ Adams, DL
Ricky Barber, WR Jacoby Jones,
WR Kobe Hudson, OL Amari
Knight

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Duane
Thomas Jr., TE Dylan Wade,
QB Tayven Jackson, RB Jaden
Nixon, DB DJ Bell

OFFENSE: Scott Frost brought in Steve Cooper as his offensive coordinator for 2025. Cooper has limited experience in the role and will share playcalling duties with Frost this season, a collaboration that should help ease the transition and keep the offense productive.

UCF has several quarterback options. Talented junior Tayven Jackson, who was an effective backup at Indiana last year, is the favorite to start. Other contenders include FAU transfer Cam Fancher and senior Miami transfer Jacurri Brown.

The Knights made a significant splash by adding Western Michigan transfer Jaden Nixon, coming off an All-MAC campaign in 2024. Myles Montgomery, who contributed as a rotational back last season will also return.



Demari Henderson

UCF Athletics

UCF lost many talented receivers to the NFL, leaving a group of promising but unproven wideouts. Marcus Burke, a former four-star LSU transfer, joins DJ Black, who excelled in Division II last year, and Duane Thomas Jr., who showed potential at Charlotte. This receiving corps will be tested early, but has the talent to develop into a reliable unit.

Paul Rubelt is the lone returning starter on the offensive line, but the Knights bolstered their front with transfers. Washington's Gaard Memmelaar, who started 11 games last year, is the most notable addition and should bring much-needed experience to the line.

DEFENSE: The Knights hired Alex Grinch, fresh off a successful stint at Wisconsin, as their defensive coordinator. Grinch faces the challenge of rebuilding a defense that lost significant production, and his expertise will be critical in reshaping the unit's identity.

UCF reinforced its defensive line through the portal, adding starter Sincere Edwards from Pitt and nose guard Horace Lockett. Returning starters John Walker and Nyjalik Kelly provide a solid foundation up front, offering a blend of youth and experience.

The linebacker corps underwent a near-complete overhaul. With very few returning players, the Knights will likely shuffle this group early in the season, looking for the right combination to provide stability and playmaking ability.

Safety Demari Henderson is the top returning defensive player. Although he missed last season with an injury, Henderson is an All-Con-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Jacksonville State
Sept. 6	North Carolina A&T
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	North Carolina
Sept. 27	@ Kansas State
Oct. 4	Kansas
Oct. 11	@ Cincinnati
Oct. 18	West Virginia
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Baylor
Nov. 7	Houston
Nov. 15	@ Texas Tech
Nov. 22	Oklahoma State
Nov. 29	@ BYU

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	62/100

ference talent when healthy. Among new faces, FAU transfer Phillip Dunnam stands out as a promising addition to the secondary, which will look to grow under Grinch's leadership.

OVERVIEW: Scott Frost's return to UCF was one of the offseason's most surprising moves. Now, he aims to recapture the success of his first two seasons with the Knights, a task that will test his ability to adapt to the evolving college football landscape.

Frost prioritized building this roster through the portal, bringing in 34 transfers while signing just 15 in his first recruiting class. This heavy reliance on transfers shows the urgency to compete immediately, but also comes with challenges related to roster building and player retention.

Seeking redemption, Frost's second stint at UCF is a poetic full circle for the coach who launched his rise here.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-7)



UTAH UTES

HEAD COACH: Kyle Whittingham
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jason Beck
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Morgan Scalley

RANK: 26

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (2-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 13th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UTAH AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2022

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 41st

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Caleb Lohner,
DL Junior Tafuna, LB Karene
Reid, TE Brant Kuithe, WR
Dorian Singer

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Devon
Dampier, RB Wayshawn Parker,
WR Ryan Davis, DB Don Saun-
ders, DL Lance Holtzclaw

OFFENSE: Kyle Whittingham has tasked Jason Beck with overhauling the offense, and Beck arrives with a significant boost thanks to several players who followed him from New Mexico. This continuity should help speed the transition and install a fresh identity for the Utah offense.

At QB, the Utes are all-in on Devon Dampier as their guy. Dampier was a dynamic playmaker in Beck's offense at New Mexico last season and carries very high potential to elevate Utah's passing game.

Wayshawn Parker burst onto the scene as a true freshman at Washington State and now joins Utah as the likely feature running back. This position is further bolstered by New Mexico transfer NaQuari Rogers, who adds depth and versatility to the backfield.



Lander Barton

Brandon Slocer / Getty Images

Utah's WR1 will likely be Ryan Davis, who developed an excellent connection with Devon Dampier last year. Tia Otto, a prolific pass catcher from Utah State, could also emerge as a primary target. As usual, Utah boasts a deep and skilled tight end group led by Dallen Bentley and Landen King.

The Utes return all five starters from last season, supplemented by a wealth of senior leadership and a deep, experienced depth chart. With multiple projected early draft picks, the Utes have the best O-line in the Big 12.

DEFENSE: Despite Utah's disappointing 2024 season, Morgan Scalley's defense remained a steady force. The unit showed resilience even when the team struggled overall.

The D-line will gain a huge boost with the return of Logan Fano, but young players like Dallas Vakalahi and John Henry Daley will need to step up at the tackle positions. Washington transfer edge rusher Lance Holtzclaw is a name to watch and should be an impactful addition.

Utah's linebacker corps will be a strength, anchored by the return of Lander Barton. This group was very effective at stopping the run last year, and key developmental players such as Moroni Anae and Levani Damuni are expected to take on expanded roles.

The secondary returns a strong top line of DBs with Tao Johnson, Elijah Davis, and Smith Snowden all back from starting roles in 2024.

OVERVIEW: Everything that could go wrong

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ UCLA
Sept. 6	Cal Poly
Sept. 13	@ Wyoming
Sept. 20	Texas Tech
Sept. 27	@ West Virginia
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Arizona State
Oct. 18	@ BYU
Oct. 25	Colorado
Nov. 1	Cincinnati
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Baylor
Nov. 22	Kansas State
Nov. 28	@ Kansas

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	85/100

for Utah seemed to happen in 2024. A slew of injuries combined with five one-score losses culminated in the Utes missing a bowl game for the first time in over a decade.

Kyle Whittingham's offseason focus was to re-vamp the offense, which began with the hire of Jason Beck. The infusion of players familiar with Beck's system from New Mexico should accelerate progress on that side of the ball. With a stout O-line and the chemistry among skill players who played together last year, Utah's offense looks poised for improvement.

One of the biggest questions surrounding Utah football is whether this will be Whittingham's final season. Scalley is the head coach-in-waiting, and there was speculation he might take over this year.

Regardless, Whittingham returns to the helm with one last chance to deliver a memorable season for Utah's faithful fans.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-4)

WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS

HEAD COACH: Rich Rodriguez
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: N/A
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Zac Alley

RANK: 51



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (5-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Frisco Bowl

WEST VIRGINIA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Big 12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2011

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 98th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Wyatt Milum,
QB Garrett Greene, RB C. J.
Donaldson Jr., TE Kole Taylor

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Cam
Vaughn, TE Jacob Barrick, LB
Chase Wilson, DB Fred Perry,
DL Jimmori Robinson

OFFENSE: Rich Rodriguez has everything he needs to engineer another prolific offense in Morgantown. After finishing in the bottom half of the conference offensively last season, things should flip quickly with his return.

West Virginia has a wealth of quarterback options this season. Junior Nicco Marchiol, who has had multiple chances with the Mountaineers, leads the group. He'll face competition from transfers Jaylen Henderson, who comes from Texas A&M but has battled injuries, and Max Brown, who transferred from Charlotte.

Running back Jahiem White has been West Virginia's top rusher the past two seasons and remains a massive returning star. He may get help from Tye Edwards, a 1,000-yard rusher at Northern Iowa last year.



Jahiem White

West Virginia Athletics

Rodney Gallagher III was a key weapon last season and stands as the most experienced returning receiver. A major offseason addition was Cam Vaughn, who followed Rodriguez from Jacksonville State, adding to an already talented receiving corps.

The Mountaineers bolstered their offensive line with a slew of transfers alongside returning starters Xavier Bausley and Landen Livingston. There was already strong infrastructure up front, and this offseason's reinforcements should solidify the unit.

DEFENSE: Zach Alley returns to West Virginia to coach under Rich Rodriguez after a brief stint at Oklahoma in 2024. Alley inherits a defense that showed flashes last year and offers some solid building blocks to improve upon.

The defensive line received a major boost with the addition of Jimmori Robinson, who tallied 10.5 sacks for UTSA last season. Senior contributors Hammond Russell IV and Edward Vestterinen return to round out a solid front.

Linebacker Chase Wilson, a two-time All-Mountain West performer from Colorado State, provides a significant upgrade to the unit. Senior Reid Carrico also returns after finishing fifth on the team in tackles last year.

West Virginia's secondary underwent a major overhaul, adding several transfers to boost competition. Jordan Walker and William Davis come in from FCS and Division II, respectively, as the Mountaineers aim to fix what was an abysmal pass defense last season. This group is the most portal-heavy unit on the roster.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Robert Morris
Sept. 6	@ Ohio
Sept. 13	Pittsburgh
Sept. 20	@ Kansas
Sept. 27	Utah
Oct. 3	@ BYU
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ UCF
Oct. 25	TCU
Nov. 1	@ Houston
Nov. 8	Colorado
Nov. 15	@ Arizona State
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 29	Texas Tech

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	74/100

OVERVIEW: Nearly 20 years after a messy split with West Virginia, veteran head coach Rich Rodriguez returns to Morgantown with hopes of restoring the program's former glory.

His success — including two conference titles in three seasons at Jacksonville State and a smooth FBS transition — proved Rodriguez still has what it takes to lead the Mountaineers.

There is significant buzz around how explosive this offense could be in year one, but the team faces high turnover. West Virginia saw a staggering 47 players enter the transfer portal last year, while adding 44 new faces. This style of transfer portal usage aligns with Rodriguez's no-nonsense coaching style.

After a decade of mediocrity, the Mountaineers are ready to rally behind a familiar face and reignite the passion of their fan base. The blend of Rodriguez's experience and fresh talent could signal a new era in Morgantown.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-6)



SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. GEORGIA	11-3 (6-2)
2. TEXAS	13-3 (7-1)
3. TENNESSEE	10-3 (6-2)
4. ALABAMA	9-4 (5-3)
5. LSU	9-4 (5-3)
6. OLE MISS	10-3 (5-3)
7. MISSOURI	10-3 (5-3)
8. SOUTH CAROLINA	9-4 (5-3)
9. TEXAS A&M	8-5 (5-3)
10. FLORIDA	8-5 (4-4)
11. ARKANSAS	7-6 (3-5)
12. VANDERBILT	7-6 (3-5)
13. AUBURN	5-7 (2-6)
14. OKLAHOMA	6-7 (2-6)
15. KENTUCKY	4-8 (1-7)
16. MISS. STATE	2-10 (0-8)

Even in a down year, **Georgia** finished on top of college football's deepest conference. Despite uncharacteristic issues—most notably their struggles running the football—the Bulldogs made key plays when it mattered most and delivered Kirby Smart his third SEC title.

Though **Texas** fell short in the conference championship, their inaugural SEC campaign was a resounding success. Any concerns about the Longhorns handling the grind of an SEC schedule were quickly put to rest.

Josh Heupel once again proved he can win in different ways, as **Tennessee** leaned heavily on its resurgent defense in 2024. Despite offensive inconsistency and a spotty passing attack, the Volunteers rode their defense all the way to their first College Football Playoff appearance.

Alabama endured a rocky transition season under Kalen DeBoer and posted a disappointing record by program standards. A stunning loss to Vanderbilt and a missed CFP berth grabbed headlines, but signs of promise were still evident beneath the surface.

LSU never quite found its rhythm and often looked a step behind throughout the season. While Blake Baker oversaw modest improvement on defense, key injuries and inconsistent execution made it hard for the Tigers to truly contend.

Ole Miss had the talent and coaching to make a serious run in 2024, but a few frustrating losses derailed what could have been a special season for Lane Kiffin's squad.

Missouri capitalized on a favorable schedule and posted back-to-back double-digit win



Jadan Baugh

John Raoux / AP Photo

seasons under Eliah Drinkwitz. The Tigers showcased the depth of their coaching staff by seamlessly replacing some major offseason departures.

South Carolina proved in 2024 that being elite in one area can take a team far. The Gamecocks' relentless pass rush caused chaos for opposing offenses and had them in the thick of the CFP race deep into the season.

Texas A&M's season followed a familiar script—early promise followed by a late collapse. Several critical November injuries left the Aggies shorthanded when their schedule turned toughest.

Florida found a second wind late in the season, triggering a resurgence that likely saved Billy Napier's job. A defensive formula clicked down the stretch, helping the Gators stifle several top-tier SEC offenses.

The Razorbacks battled through one of the toughest schedules in the nation and managed to return to bowl eligibility for the first time since 2021. The Bobby Petrino experiment paid off, revitalizing **Arkansas'** offense in the process.

Vanderbilt shattered expectations with a thrilling upset win over Alabama and rode that momentum to a bowl berth. Star quarterback Diego Pavia personified the team's gritty, underdog mentality.

Auburn's 2024 season was derailed by injuries, turnovers, and penalties. With an extremely young roster, the Tigers never found their footing and struggled to stay competitive.

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 29	AUB @ BAY
Aug. 30	BAMA @ FSU
Aug. 30	LSU @ CLEM
Aug. 30	TENN vs SU
Aug. 30	TEXAS @ OSU
Aug. 31	SCAR vs VA TECH
Sept. 6	ASU @ MISS ST
Sept. 6	KU @ MIZZ
Sept. 6	MICH @ OU
Sept. 13	TAMU @ ND
Sept. 20	UF @ MIAMI
Nov. 28	UGA @ GA TECH
Nov. 29	FSU @ UF
Nov. 29	UK @ UL
Nov. 29	CLEM @ SCAR

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

KALEN DEBOER, BAMA	B-
SAM PITTMAN, ARK	C+
HUGH FREEZE, AUB	D
BILLY NAPIER, UF	B
KIRBY SMART, UGA	A-
MARK STOOPS, UK	D-
BRIAN KELLY, LSU	C
JEFF LEBBY, MSU	D-
ELIAH DRINKWITZ, MIZ	A
BRENT VENABLES, OU	D
LANE KIFFIN, MISS	B-
SHANE BEAMER, SCAR	A
JOSH HEUPEL, TENN	A-
MIKE ELKO, TAMU	B
STEVE SARKISIAN, UT	A+
CLARK LEA, VANDY	A

The Sooners SEC debut couldn't have gone much worse offensively, as **Oklahoma** failed to find any rhythm on that side of the ball. Their defense, however, kept them afloat and was the catalyst behind a stunning upset of Alabama late in the season.

Kentucky teased potential early in the year with a near-upset of Georgia and a successful one versus Ole Miss, but faded down the stretch. The Wildcats' lack of offensive firepower made it difficult to string together wins.

Mississippi State's transition under Jeff Lebbey was a total misfire. The Bulldogs suffered a humiliating home loss to Toledo and failed to win a single SEC game in a season to forget.

SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Garrett Nussmeier, LSU

OPOY: Ryan Williams, ALABAMA

DPOY: Dylan Stewart, SOUTH CAROLINA

COACH OF THE YEAR: Brent Venables, OKLAHOMA

1. ALABAMA Many underestimated the difficult circumstances Kalen DeBoer faced in his first season. Now, with a full offseason under his belt and a retooled staff around him, Alabama is poised to return to the national title conversation.

2. TEXAS The Longhorns' ability to reload at an elite level will be put to the test this year. With star power across the board, Texas has the talent to compete at the highest level and should be back in the CFP with a shot at another deep run.

3. LSU An excellent cast of offensive playmakers will lead the way, but it's LSU's renewed focus on elite defensive play that stands out. If Blake Baker can unlock this group's potential, the Bayou Bengals could be a real threat.

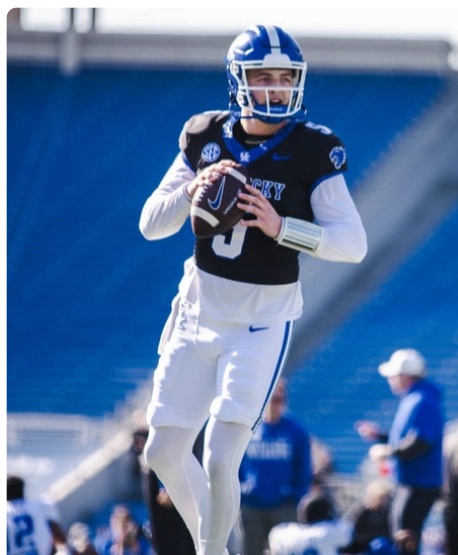
4. GEORGIA The Bulldogs aim to reclaim their identity this season and bounce back from what was ultimately a disappointing year. If they can reestablish their trademark ground game, they'll be a tough out in the SEC.

5. TEXAS A&M Last season unfolded much like previous years for Aggies fans, but all signs point to Mike Elko steering the program the right way. This could be the breakout year they've been patiently waiting for.

6. OKLAHOMA The Sooners have an excellent defense that should raise their floor this season. Their offensive upside, bolstered by new transfer portal additions, is impossible to ignore and could carry the team through a daunting schedule.

7. FLORIDA The Gators appear poised to build on their 2024 success with renewed confidence under Billy Napier. Florida enters 2025 with more certainty than they've had in years and could deliver a truly special season.

8. SOUTH CAROLINA The Gamecocks found success in 2024 with an elite pass rush and have all the tools to replicate that dominance



Zach Calzada

Aaron Perkins / KSR

this season. LaNorris Sellers possesses the makings of a future star, adding major upside to the team.

9. AUBURN The Tigers enter 2025 with momentum after showing promising growth and improved chemistry last season. With Jackson Arnold at QB and arguably the best group of pass catchers in the country, Auburn has a high ceiling.

10. OLE MISS Few programs endured as much offseason attrition as Ole Miss, particularly on the defensive side of the ball where several elite players moved on. The Rebels will also need to break in some unproven skill position talent if they hope to maintain the offensive explosiveness that carried them last fall.

11. MISSOURI Elijah Drinkwitz turned to the transfer portal to fill major offensive holes, giving Missouri a realistic shot at replicating last season's production. Once again, the Tigers benefit from one of the most favorable schedules in the SEC.

12. TENNESSEE Unexpected quarterback drama in the spring portal window threw a wrench into Tennessee's offseason plans and leaves the Vols with uncertainty under center.

13. ARKANSAS With Bobby Petrino back calling plays and several major contributors returning, Arkansas hopes to build on the offensive spark it found late in 2024. For the Razorbacks to take a real step forward, however, they'll need a significant turnaround on defense.

14. VANDERBILT Clark Lea and his staff cap-

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 13	UF @ LSU
Sept. 13	UGA @ TENN
Sept. 20	SCAR @ MIZZ
Sept. 20	AUB @ OU
Sept. 27	BAMA @ UGA
Sept. 27	LSU @ MISS
Oct. 4	TEXAS @ UF
Oct. 11	UGA @ AUB
Oct. 11	OU vs TEXAS
Oct. 18	TENN @ BAMA
Oct. 18	MISS @ UGA
Nov. 15	TEXAS @ UGA
Nov. 29	BAMA @ AUB
Nov. 29	VANDY @ TENN
Nov. 29	TAMU @ TEXAS

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (1)	TEXAS
2. (2)	GEORGIA
3. (3)	ALABAMA
4. (7)	FLORIDA
5. (8)	AUBURN
6. (9)	TEXAS A&M
7. (10)	LSU
8. (11)	TENNESSEE
9. (16)	OLE MISS
10. (17)	OKLAHOMA
11. (18)	SOUTH CAROLINA
12. (20)	MISSOURI
13. (28)	MISSISSIPPI STATE
14. (29)	KENTUCKY
15. (32)	ARKANSAS
16. (77)	VANDERBILT

itized on the program's 2024 momentum by bringing in what may be Vanderbilt's strongest transfer class ever. With electric quarterback Diego Pavia back to lead the way, the Commodores have earned the right to be taken seriously in every matchup this season.

15. KENTUCKY The Wildcats replicated their formula of rebuilding their backfield via the transfer portal this offseason, despite the fact that this approach has yielded mixed results recently.

16. MISSISSIPPI STATE The Bulldogs will look for signs of positive progression in year two under Jeff Leiby, who added a plethora of talent via the transfer portal.



ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

HEAD COACH: Kalen DeBoer
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Grubb, JaMarcus Shephard
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kane Wommack, Maurice Linguist

RANK: 2

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: 17th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the ReliaQuest Bowl

ALABAMA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2023

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 35th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 9 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Jalen Milroe,
LB Jihaad Campbell, DB Mala-
chi Moore, LB Que Robinson, TE
Robbie Ouzts, DL Tim Smith

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Kam
Dewberry, WR Isaiah Horton,
QB Keelon Russell, DL Kelby
Collins, DB Cam Calhoun

OFFENSE: Ryan Grubb's return as the offensive coordinator under Kalen DeBoer should provide a major boost to a side of the football that had critical flaws throughout 2024.

The Crimson Tide are asking for a new face to step up at QB. Former five-star and redshirt junior Ty Simpson is the frontrunner, but Austin Mack has the leg up for being the guy this staff recruited out of high school. If all else fails, true freshman Keelon Russell could get a look.

Jam Miller led an inconsistent running game for Alabama last season and will likely see more carries this season without the dual threat of Jalen Milroe in the backfield. Alabama will have depth at RB with Richard Young, who played well as a freshman, and transfer Dre Washington, who ran for over 500 yards for Louisiana.



Ryan Williams

John Leuzzi / USA Today

WR Ryan Williams launched into stardom in 2024 and has an opportunity for a special season. With Germie Bernard and Miami transfer Isaiah Horton also drawing targets, this passing attack should be lethal.

The Crimson Tide battled inconsistent O-line play in 2024, yet return three starters in Kaydn Proctor, Parker Brailsford, and Jaeden Roberts. Alabama had a major portal win with the addition of former freshman All-American Kam Dewberry. This unit has elite talent and depth, and has the potential to be the best pass and run blocking crew in the country.

DEFENSE: Despite a star-studded defensive staff comprised of two coordinators who left head coaching jobs for Alabama, the defense struggled by their high standards. Another year to develop their young talent should yield better results.

The Alabama D-line returns LT Overton and Tim Keenan III for their senior seasons, both of which could have declared for the NFL draft. Redshirt freshmen Isaia Faga and Jeremiah Beaman are expected to take on major roles at tackle for a relatively young unit overall.

This LB corps will be tested after the loss of Jihaad Campbell, but Deontae Lawson and Justin Jefferson still bring an impressive edge to this group. The Crimson Tide are hoping to improve their run defense, which finished in the bottom half of the SEC in 2024.

Alabama is loaded in the secondary, with true sophomore Zabien Brown and big contributors like Keon Sabb and Bray Hubbard returning to

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Florida State
Sept. 6	Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 13	Wisconsin
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ Georgia
Oct. 4	Vanderbilt
Oct. 11	@ Missouri
Oct. 18	Tennessee
Oct. 25	@ South Carolina
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	LSU
Nov. 15	Oklahoma
Nov. 22	Eastern Illinois
Nov. 29	@ Auburn

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	94/100

the starting lineup. Their DB unit held strong through last season's struggles and should again be a strength.

OVERVIEW: Kalen DeBoer tackled the unenviable task of following the greatest football coach of all time. Last season's roster was clearly affected by the fact DeBoer wasn't hired until mid-January and missed the Winter portal window.

It was widely speculated that this staff didn't have the chance to build the roster they envisioned in year one. That could lead to a major year two boost for Alabama, where some small adjustments could have a massive payoff in between the white lines.

This remains one of the best coaching staffs in the country, and Alabama will again measure up talent-wise with anyone. It took special circumstances to keep them out of the CFP in 2024, and that's unlikely to repeat.

RECORD PREDICTION: 11-1 (7-1)

ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

HEAD COACH: Sam Pittman
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bobby Petrino
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Travis Williams, Marcus Woodson

RANK: 44



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Liberty Bowl



Taylen Green

Curtis Wilkerson / USA Today

ARKANSAS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1989

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 64th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Isaac TeSlaa, DL Landon Jackson, DL Keivie Rose, RB Ja'Quinden Jackson, WR Andrew Armstrong

KEY ADDITIONS: DL David Oke, DB Caleb Wooden, WR O'Mega Blake, OL Caden Kitler, TE Rohan Jones, WR Ismael Cisse

OFFENSE: The remarriage of Bobby Petrino and Arkansas proved to be a major success in 2024. Petrino's return sparked a balanced offensive attack that ranked second in the SEC in yards per game.

Prolific dual-threat Taylen Green is back at QB and gives Arkansas stability at the position. He'll look to clean up his efficiency as a passer and cut down on sacks, but his dynamic ability to run the ball will remain a major weapon.

Braylen Russell was excellent as a freshman last season and enters 2025 as the lead back. The Razorbacks added experienced depth with Mike Washington Jr. and AJ Green, who bring valuable Power four experience.

There's a lot of turnover at WR, but Arkansas

brought in a strong group of transfers to fill the void. O'Mega Blake is coming off a monster season at Charlotte, and Ismael Cisse brings upside from Stanford. The Razorbacks also landed a top-end TE in Rohan Jones, who was a major weapon at Montana State.

The O-line was a strength in 2024, especially in the run game, and returns three starters from last year's unit. The group also adds several notable transfers, including Caden Kitler, who started 11 games for UCF and is expected to have a major role.

DEFENSE: Arkansas took a step backward defensively last season under Travis Williams and Marcus Woodson, and turning that around will be the top priority in 2025. Replacing high-end players like Landon Jackson won't come easy, but there are pieces to work with.

Cameron Ball returns as the veteran anchor of the defensive front. He'll be joined by sophomore standout Charlie Collins and senior Danny Sails, while senior transfer David Oke — who recorded 9.5 TFLs at Abilene Christian — leads a transfer class that should raise the unit's ceiling.

At linebacker, the Razorbacks return a pair of key seniors in Stephen Dix Jr. and Xavian Sorey Jr., both of whom bring proven SEC experience. They'll be joined by a talented young group, including true freshman Tavion Wallace, a high-upside newcomer who could see meaningful snaps early.

The secondary was a major weak spot in 2024, surrendering nearly 250 passing yards per game. Returning starters Larry Worth III and

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Alabama A&M
Sept. 6	Arkansas State
Sept. 13	@ Ole Miss
Sept. 20	@ Memphis
Sept. 27	Notre Dame
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Tennessee
Oct. 18	Texas A&M
Oct. 25	Auburn
Nov. 1	Mississippi State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ LSU
Nov. 22	@ Texas
Nov. 29	Missouri

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	77/100

Miguel Mitchell bring experience, but Arkansas hit the portal hard here too, hoping that a fresh crop of transfers can help elevate the group's performance.

OVERVIEW: Arkansas found a rhythm last season and looked like a true threat in the SEC behind a revitalized offense. In 2025, the Razorbacks are hoping to continue that momentum — but it'll require real progress on the defensive side to make a leap.

This was one of the most portal-active teams in the country, and the staff did a good job targeting depth and potential playmakers. There's no question that this roster has improved on paper, but translating that into results will be the challenge.

Still, if Bobby Petrino can deliver another top tier offense, Arkansas will have enough firepower to win games and stay competitive in a deep SEC — with hopes of climbing even higher.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-5)



AUBURN TIGERS

HEAD COACH: Hugh Freeze
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Derrick Nix
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: D. J. Durkin

RANK: 28

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 14th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

AUBURN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2013

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 22nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Jarquez Hunter, WR KeAndre Lambert-Smith, LB Jalen McLeod, DB Jerrin Thompson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Eric Singleton Jr., OL Xavier Chaplin, QB Jackson Arnold, OL Mason Murphy, WR Sam Turner

OFFENSE: Auburn's offense managed to find production in 2024 despite inconsistent QB play, injuries, and overall inexperience. With a year of growth under their belt, Hugh Freeze and Derrick Nix have more confidence in the unit heading into 2025.

Former five-star Jackson Arnold arrives from Oklahoma looking for a fresh start and appears to be the answer Auburn has been seeking under center. If needed, the Tigers also have experienced Stanford transfer Ashton Daniels and promising freshman Deuce Knight in the room.

The RB position is wide open, but Auburn has a pair of promising options in Damari Alston and Jeremiah Cobb. Neither has been the lead back before, but both will have a chance to win the



Cam Coleman

Jake Crandall / USA Today

job outright during fall camp and continue the tradition of Auburn having great running game.

At WR, Auburn might boast the most explosive group in the country. Cam Coleman and Malcolm Simmons return after breakout freshman years, and Georgia Tech transfer Eric Singleton Jr. adds another dangerous vertical threat. A strong group of underclassmen provides further depth.

Auburn returns its starting center Lew Connor and both guards from last year, but addressed its tackle positions through the portal. Xavier Chaplin and Mason Murphy bring plenty of Power Five experience and should help fortify a unit that struggled in pass protection.

DEFENSE: D.J. Durkin brought some positive change to the defense last season, but Auburn still finished in the bottom half of the SEC in most key metrics. Development and consistency will be crucial in year two under his leadership.

The D-line is young but figures to be a major strength. Keldric Faulk has grown into a premier pass rusher, and rising contributors like Malik Blocton help round out a physical and deep front.

The Tigers lost four senior LBs from last year, so the position will be led by inexperienced players. Sophomore Demarcus Riddick flashed as a freshman and is expected to play a much larger role this fall.

Auburn's secondary took its lumps in 2024 but could be a strength with added experience.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	@ Baylor
Sept. 6	Ball State
Sept. 13	South Alabama
Sept. 20	@ Oklahoma
Sept. 27	@ Texas A&M
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Georgia
Oct. 18	Missouri
Oct. 25	@ Arkansas
Nov. 1	Kentucky
Nov. 8	@ Vanderbilt
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	Mercer
Nov. 29	Alabama

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	84/100

Corners Kayin Lee and Jay Crawford emerged as a reliable tandem, and safety Kaleb Harris — one of the team's top freshmen a year ago — is set for a breakout sophomore campaign.

OVERVIEW: Auburn played nearly 3,000 snaps with true freshmen last season — more than almost any team in the country. While that served as a valid reason for the team's growing pains, Hugh Freeze enters year three with the expectation to produce results.

The Tigers should benefit from better chemistry and development, and key offensive additions could elevate their ceiling if they mesh quickly. The talent level is improving, even if the roster remains very young.

All signs point to Auburn taking a step forward in 2025, but their ceiling will depend on the consistency and growth of their QB room — and whether that potential turns into results against SEC competition.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (4-4)

FLORIDA GATORS

HEAD COACH: Billy Napier
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Russ Callaway
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ron Roberts

RANK: 15



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Gasparilla Bowl

FLORIDA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2008

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 18th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6 offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Chimere Dike, DL Cam Jackson, DB Jason Marshall Jr., QB Graham Mertz, P Jeremy Crawshaw

KEY ADDITIONS: WR J. Michael Sturdivant, QB Harrison Bailey, WR Dallas Wilson, DB Lagonza Hayward, WR Vernell Brown III

OFFENSE: Florida's offense flashed late in 2024, but the overall narrative was one of inconsistency. Russ Callaway will aim to build on the progress shown in the season's final stretch.

DJ Lagway returns healthy and ready to showcase the elite upside that made him one of the top QB prospects in the country. Veteran Harrison Bailey joins the room from Louisville and brings valuable experience in case Lagway goes down. Florida's offensive efficiency dipped way down in 2024 when Lagway wasn't healthy.

The Gators' formidable backfield should remain strong despite the departure of Montrell Johnson Jr. Jadan Baugh returns after an impressive freshman campaign, and Ja'Kobi Jackson is back following a 500-yard season of his own.



DJ Lagway

Kim Clement Neitzel / Imagn Images

They'll have the potential to be one of the most devastating RB duos in the country this season.

Eugene Wilson III leads the WR group as Lagway's top target after a productive 2024. The Gators also add a Pac-12 veteran in J. Michael Sturdivant, who brings playmaking experience from both UCLA and Cal. Tight end Hayden Hansen returns as a trusted target as well.

Florida's offensive line should be among the best in the SEC, with four starters returning — including All-American center Jake Slaughter. This group will be the offensive backbone in 2025, and should continue to pave the way for an excellent rushing attack.

DEFENSE: Though Florida's defense struggled overall in 2024, the unit showed flashes of dominance down the stretch. With more experience and time in the system, optimism is growing for a turnaround this season.

The defensive front should be a major strength. Edge rusher George Gumbs Jr., DL Tyreek Sapp, and tackle Caleb Banks all return after combining for 16.5 sacks last year. Health will be key for this group to reach its ceiling, which is sky high this season.

The LB unit returns solid contributors in Jaden Robinson, Grayson Howard, and Myles Graham. Florida will need this group to step up, particularly in defending the run.

In the secondary, the Gators are counting on a bounce-back year from several players who missed time in 2024. Bryce Thornton and Aaron Gates headline a group looking to make a big

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Long Island
Sept. 6	South Florida
Sept. 13	@ LSU
Sept. 20	@ Miami
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Texas
Oct. 11	@ Texas A&M
Oct. 18	Mississippi State
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Georgia
Nov. 8	@ Kentucky
Nov. 15	@ Ole Miss
Nov. 22	Tennessee
Nov. 29	Florida State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	87/100

impact with better injury luck in 2025.

OVERVIEW: Florida endured injuries, noise, and early setbacks last year but closed 2024 as one of the hottest teams in the country.

If the Gators can bottle their late-season momentum, they'll be a tough matchup for anyone on the schedule.

With a healthy and dynamic QB in Lagway, a loaded backfield, a physical O-line, and a versatile group of pass-catchers, this offense is closer to breaking out than many realize.

Defensively, staying healthy is the top priority. Few teams in the country dealt with as many untimely injuries as Florida.

Year four under Billy Napier comes with less noise and a favorable early slate, giving the Gators a real shot to get off to a strong start and silence any remaining doubters.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-3)



GEORGIA BULLDOGS

HEAD COACH: Kirby Smart
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bobo
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Glenn Schumann, Travaris Robinson

RANK: 7

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-3 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: 6th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Sugar Bowl

GEORGIA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 105th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 6 defensive

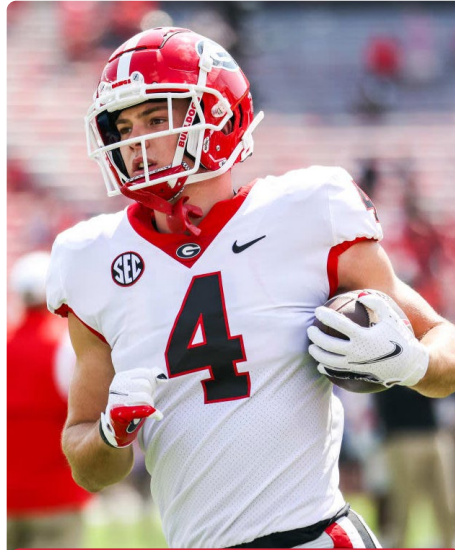
KEY LOSSES: DL Mykel Wil-
liams, LB Jalon Walker, DB Mal-
aki Starks, OL Tate Ratledge,
QB Carson Beck

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Zachariah
Branch, LB Elo Modozie, WR
Noah Thomas, DB Zion Branch,
DL Elijah Griffin

OFFENSE: Georgia leaned more on the passing game in 2024 due to a subpar ground attack, but offensive coordinator Mike Bobo is intent on returning the Bulldogs to their trademark power run identity this season.

All signs point to veteran QB Gunner Stockton taking over. He brings the most experience in the room, along with a steady hand and familiarity with the offense. Redshirt freshman Ryan Puglisi is a high-upside option, but likely remains a year away with Kirby Smart's tendency historically to start the safer option at this position.

RB Nate Frazier surged late in his freshman year and will be the feature back. Illinois transfer Josh McCray adds short-yardage power after logging 600 yards and 10 touchdowns in



Oscar Delp

Sports Illustrated

2024, while former four-star Roderick Robinson II adds to the depth.

The Bulldogs bring back dynamic playmakers in Dillon Bell, Colbie Young, and London Humphreys. USC transfer Zachariah Branch is a home-run threat both at WR and on special teams. At TE, Georgia remains stacked with Oscar Delp and Lawson Luckie leading the way.

Although several offensive linemen return, this unit didn't live up to Georgia's standard last year. The Bulldogs will need major improvement up front, and five-star freshman Juan Gaston could be an early contributor.

DEFENSE: Glenn Schumann and Travaris Robinson guided Georgia's defense to an elite level again in 2024, and despite losing key contributors, the program is poised to reload with top-tier talent.

Christen Miller is the lone returning starter on the D-line, but the Bulldogs are flush with young blue-chip talent. Elijah Griffin, Nasir Johnson, and Joseph Jonah-Ajonye are just a few breakout candidates in the trenches.

Linebackers CJ Allen and Raylen Wilson offer a solid returning core. Army transfer Elo Modozie, who posted 6.5 sacks in 2024, adds valuable experience and versatility to a unit looking for a bit of a bounceback season.

The secondary will be the backbone of the defense. Two-year starter Daylen Everette leads a group loaded with experience, and Georgia made a savvy addition with USC transfer Zion Branch to bolster the back end.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Marshall
Sept. 6	Austin Peay
Sept. 13	@ Tennessee
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Alabama
Oct. 4	Kentucky
Oct. 11	@ Auburn
Oct. 18	Ole Miss
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Florida
Nov. 8	@ Mississippi State
Nov. 15	Texas
Nov. 22	Charlotte
Nov. 28	Georgia Tech

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	92/100

OVERVIEW: Kirby Smart called last year's staff performance one of the best coaching jobs he's been a part of—and it's hard to argue. Georgia overcame injuries and inconsistency in key areas to win the SEC title.

One area to watch is the offensive line, where Georgia chose not to lean heavily on the portal. The staff's selective approach to transfers has yielded mixed results over the past few years.

Even without household names, this defense looks ready to rise to the occasion again. All eyes will be on the offense, where the Bulldogs' identity under Smart has typically been a dominant ground game, yet the offense was more reliant on a sporadic passing game in 2024.

All problems are relative, and Georgia's issues are very miniscule compared to others. They still have some things to iron out before they can confidently be inserted back in the national title conversation.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (5-3)

KENTUCKY WILDCATS

HEAD COACH: Mark Stoops
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bush Hamdan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brad White

RANK: 52



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (1-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 15th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

KENTUCKY AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1976

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 52nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Deone Walker,
DB Maxwell Hairston, LB Jamon
Dumas-Johnson, OL Eli Cox, OL
Landon Young

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Zach Calza-
ada, RB Dante Dowdell, OL Alex
Wollschlaeger, WR Kendrick
Law, LB Sam Greene

OFFENSE: Bush Hamdan's offense sputtered badly in 2024, averaging just over 20 points per game. As in recent years, Kentucky turned to the portal in hopes of retooling its backfield and stabilizing the unit.

Zach Calzada is expected to start at QB. While his last SEC snaps came in 2021 with mixed results, he's since revived his career at Incarnate Word, where he threw for over 6,000 yards and 54 touchdowns the past two seasons. People may be pleasantly surprised by his 2025 performance.

Former Nebraska back Dante Dowdell arrives as the latest transfer RB, bringing over 600 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns from 2024. He'll be the likely feature back in Lexington this fall for a critical running game.



Daveren Rayner

Jordan Prather / Imagn Images

At WR, Alabama transfer Kendrick Law is expected to step into a key role. Ja'Mori Maclin is the most experienced returner, and several freshmen could contribute in what's likely to be a fluid rotation. At TE, Josh Gattus returns as a pass catcher that will be a nice safety valve for Calzada this season.

Fixing the O-line was a major priority after a rough 2024. Kentucky brought in All-MAC Bowling Green transfer Alex Wollschlaeger and New Mexico State veteran Shiyazh Pete, hoping to stabilize a group that struggled mightily last season.

DEFENSE: Brad White once again led a strong Kentucky defense, highlighted by its standout secondary. The group will need to improve in the trenches, especially after losing key personnel.

Up front, the Wildcats must replace Deone Walker and several others. Transfers David Gusta from Washington State and Mi'Quise Humphrey-Grace out of South Dakota will help reinforce the D-line. Senior Kahlil Sanders will return up front after a productive 2024 season where he saw action in 11 games.

At linebacker, Daveren Rayner returns after missing much of 2024 with injury, and should be a top tackler. USC transfer Sam Greene brings pass-rushing ability, while Alex Afari adds flexibility as a guy that can star in multiple roles for the defense.

Despite some attrition, Kentucky's secondary still has several key returners. Jordan Lovett provides a steady presence at safety, and the

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Toledo
Sept. 6	Ole Miss
Sept. 13	Eastern Michigan
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ South Carolina
Oct. 4	@ Georgia
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	Texas
Oct. 25	Tennessee
Nov. 1	@ Auburn
Nov. 8	Florida
Nov. 15	Tennessee Tech
Nov. 22	@ Vanderbilt
Nov. 29	@ Louisville

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	74/100

Wildcats opted not to pursue any transfers in this group—a clear vote of confidence in their development and scheme.

OVERVIEW: Kentucky started 2024 with some fight but collapsed down the stretch, ending the year on a six-game FBS losing streak. It was Mark Stoops' first time missing a bowl since 2015—a rare dip in an otherwise consistent era.

Rather than overhaul the program, the Wildcats kept their staff intact and leaned into internal development. That belief extends to the roster, where familiar strategies—like adding a veteran QB via the portal—remain in place.

2025 offers Mark Stoops a crucial opportunity to reset expectations and restore momentum around the program. Tthis season could mark the beginning of a positive new chapter under Stoops' steady leadership, or be an indicator that his time leading Kentucky is coming to a close.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (2-6)



LSU TIGERS

HEAD COACH: Brian Kelly
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Sloan, Cortez Hankton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Baker

RANK: 5

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Texas Bowl

LSU AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2019

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 38th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: TE Mason Taylor, OL Will Campbell, WR Kyren Lacy, DL Bradyn Swinson, LB Sai'vion Jones

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Patrick Payton, WR Nic Anderson, WR Barion Brown, DL Jack Pyburn, DB Mansoor Delane

OFFENSE: LSU's offense was prolific in 2024 but ultimately limited by its one-dimensional approach. If the Tigers can find balance this season between the run and pass, their ceiling will reach absurd heights.

Garrett Nussmeier returns for his senior year at QB, looking to build on his progress as a second-year starter. LSU has had an excellent track record with veteran returning QBs recently. An underrated addition is Michael Van Buren Jr., transferring from Mississippi State, who offers a reliable backup option.

On the ground, Caden Durham broke out as a freshman, providing LSU with a solid chance to develop a respectable running game in 2025.

Aaron Anderson remains the top returning wide receiver option, but LSU's transfer portal success has loaded this group with talent. Prolific pass catchers like Chris Hilton Jr. might even struggle to find snaps given the depth added by Oklahoma's Nic Anderson and Kentucky's Barion Brown. This makes LSU's receiving corps one of the most dangerous in the country.



Harold Perkins Jr.

John Karduner / Getty Images

The offensive line, however, returns only center DJ Chester, and may lack an upperclassman starter at any other position. While LSU's O-line has developed well in recent years, it may be unrealistic to expect rock-solid play from this young unit immediately.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Blake Baker began overhauling LSU's defense last season, producing mixed results in his first year. With increased buy-in and young starters gaining experience, this unit could finally click in 2025.

The defensive line remains young, with true sophomores Dominick McKinley and Ahmad Breaux likely leading the front. LSU bolstered its pass rush significantly via the transfer portal, adding All-ACC defender Patrick Payton, Florida EDGE Jack Pyburn, and Nebraska starter Jimari Butler.

No team in college football boasts a more daunting linebacker corps. Whit Weeks and Harold Perkins Jr. both have the potential to be the sport's best defenders, though both are coming off season-ending injuries. They are backed up by Weeks' brother West and promising youngsters like Davhon Keys and Charles Ross II, giving LSU depth worthy of the hype.

In the secondary, LSU boasts an elite safety duo in Dashawn Spears and Jardin Gilbert, a lockdown corner in PJ Woodland, and high-profile transfers including All-ACC defensive back Mansoor Delane. Anything short of a top-tier secondary this year would be a disappointment.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Clemson
Sept. 6	Louisiana Tech
Sept. 13	Florida
Sept. 20	SE Louisiana
Sept. 27	@ Ole Miss
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	South Carolina
Oct. 18	@ Vanderbilt
Oct. 25	Texas A&M
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Alabama
Nov. 15	Arkansas
Nov. 22	Western Kentucky
Nov. 29	@ Oklahoma

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	10/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	10/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	92/100

OVERVIEW: Brian Kelly and LSU's hopes for an SEC title unraveled during a three-game losing streak late last season, but the feeling in Baton Rouge is that 2025 will be their breakthrough year.

2024 served as year one for both Nussmeier as the starting QB and Blake Baker as defensive coordinator, and featured an overall young roster. While frustration is growing over Kelly's inability to replicate the success of his inaugural season—when LSU reached the SEC Championship Game—there are several positive factors aligning this year. With a more balanced offense, a bolstered defense, and a deeper roster, the Tigers have a real chance to break through and silence the critics once and for all.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-2)

MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

HEAD COACH: Jeff Lebby
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Lebby
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Coleman Hutzler, Matt Barnes

RANK: 58



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 2-10 (0-8)

CONFERENCE RANK: 16th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

MISSISSIPPI STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1941

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 37th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Decamerion
Richardson, DL Jaden Crumedy,
LB Nathaniel Watson, WR Kevin
Coleman Jr.

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Fluff
Bothwell, WR Markus Allen, OL
Koby Keenum, DL Will Whitson

OFFENSE: Jeff Lebby managed to engineer a respectable offense for Mississippi State in his first season, laying down solid building blocks for 2025.

The Bulldogs have not committed to a single QB this offseason, opting instead to evaluate several options. Blake Shapen, the incumbent starter, struggled with inconsistency and injuries last year but remains the most likely Week 1 starter. Florida State transfer Luke Kromenhoek is a talented yet inexperienced prospect, while four-star freshman Kamario Taylor — personally recruited by Lebby out of high school — adds intriguing depth to the position.

Mississippi State quietly boasts one of the SEC's best two-headed rushing attacks. South Alabama transfer Fluff Bothwell burst onto the



Isaac Smith

Mississippi State Athletics

scene as a freshman and will be a key weapon alongside Davon Booth, the Bulldogs' primary back and an All-SEC returner.

The WR corps was significantly bolstered through the transfer portal, adding dynamic players like Eastern Michigan's Markus Allen and former Oklahoma standout Brenen Thompson, who is already familiar with Lebby's offensive scheme. Returning TE Seydou Traore, a prized portal addition last season, also figures heavily in the passing attack after posting nearly 400 yards and 30 receptions.

The O-line struggled to protect the quarterback in 2024, prompting the Bulldogs to seek reinforcements via the transfer portal. Among the high-upside additions is Kentucky backup Koby Keenum, a sophomore who was a highly rated recruit and could offer a spark upfront.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinators Coleman Hutzler and Matt Barnes return to lead a unit with nowhere to go but up after a historically poor 2024 campaign. Mississippi State finished last in the SEC in yards allowed, points allowed, and across nearly every defensive statistical category.

The Bulldogs will rely on a senior-heavy D-line anchored by Kedrick Bingley-Jones at tackle, supplemented by three graduate transfers brought in to add experience and depth. Unlocking the potential of several talented players who have yet to break out will be key.

At LB, All-SEC freshman transfer Jalen Smith headlines the group. Nic Mitchell and Branden Jennings, who both started nearly every game

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Southern Miss
Sept. 6	Arizona State
Sept. 13	Alcorn State
Sept. 20	Northern Illinois
Sept. 27	Tennessee
Oct. 4	@ Texas A&M
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ Florida
Oct. 25	Texas
Nov. 1	@ Arkansas
Nov. 8	Georgia
Nov. 15	@ Missouri
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 28	Ole Miss

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	72/100

last season return for the Bulldogs as well.

A major boost comes in the secondary with the return of All-SEC defensive back Isaac Smith, who is expected to lead a unit welcoming high-profile transfers Jahron Manning and Dwight Lewis III.

OVERVIEW: Jeff Lebby's first season as a head coach went about as poorly as imaginable, with the Bulldogs managing only a single FBS win over UMass and suffering a crushing 24-point home loss to Toledo.

However, Mississippi State has aggressively pursued improvement this offseason, with nearly half of their projected offensive and defensive starters arriving via the transfer portal.

While a significant talent gap remains between the Bulldogs and the SEC's elite programs, 2025 offers a valuable opportunity to measure progress.

RECORD PREDICTION: 2-10 (0-8)



MISSOURI TIGERS

HEAD COACH: Eliah Drinkwitz
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirby Moore
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Corey Batoon

RANK: 30

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: 22nd

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Music City Bowl

MISSOURI AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1969

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 51st

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Armand Mbembé, WR Luther Burden III, WR Theo Wease Jr., OL Marcus Bryant

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Ahmad Hardy, QB Beau Pribula, WR Kevin Coleman Jr., LB Damon Wilson II, DB Jalen Catalon

OFFENSE: Kirby Moore's offense turned in another excellent performance in 2024 and enters this season with one of the clearest identities in the conference. Missouri used the transfer portal to perfection, landing a trio of top-tier additions who are expected to lead the way in 2025.

The Tigers swooped into Penn State's QB room to land Beau Pribula as their new starter. Pribula flashed potential in limited action for the Nittany Lions, and now will get the chance to start.

RB Ahmad Hardy exploded for over 1,300 yards and 13 TDs as a freshman at ULM last year, and has the potential to be the SEC's top rusher this season.

The third piece of Missouri's offseason master-



Brett Norfleet

Cara Penquite / Missourian

class is WR Kevin Coleman Jr., who impressed despite a dysfunctional situation at Mississippi State. Veterans Marquis Johnson and Joshua Manning also bring valuable experience in this offense. Missouri also returns a deep and seasoned TE group, headlined by Brett Norfleet.

The O-line underwent changes at the tackle spots, both filled via the transfer portal, while the interior returns key contributors. Replacing two All-SEC linemen won't be easy, and the unit may experience some early growing pains, but there's enough continuity to build on.

DEFENSE: Even without defensive coordinator Blake Baker, Missouri flexed the depth of their defensive coaching staff with another solid showing on this side of the football.

The D-line was solid at stopping the run, and return Sterling Webb and Chris McClellan at the tackle positions. They will also benefit from the return of defensive end Zion Young, and the addition of several talented pass rushers out of the transfer portal.

Missouri replaced some significant LB losses through the addition of talented sophomore West Virginia LB Josiah Trotter and elite prospect Damon Wilson II from Georgia. Their starting will LB Triston Newson is another key returning player for a unit set to repeat their 2024 success.

This team was able to hang their hat on the second best pass defense in the conference last season, and will need some strides to match their efforts this year. Daylan Carnell and Marvin Burks Jr. are returning starters, but they'll turn

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Central Arkansas
Sept. 6	Kansas
Sept. 13	Louisiana
Sept. 20	South Carolina
Sept. 27	UMass
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Alabama
Oct. 18	@ Auburn
Oct. 25	@ Vanderbilt
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Texas A&M
Nov. 15	Mississippi State
Nov. 22	@ Oklahoma
Nov. 29	@ Arkansas

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	83/100

to Washington State transfer Stephen Hall and UNLV transfer Jalen Catalon to fill key needs at corner and safety respectively.

OVERVIEW: Missouri was far from a top tier SEC team in 2024, but took advantage of their friendly league schedule to turn in consecutive double digit win seasons.

The Tigers' recent success has inspired talented players to come play in Columbia, and the 2025 team is built around those transfer players.

The concern for this team will be their lack of familiarity with these new weapons, and some potential regression from the best parts of their defense.

Luckily for Missouri, they are blessed with another incredibly forgiving schedule in 2025, and should ride it into another successful campaign in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (3-5)

OKLAHOMA SOONERS

HEAD COACH: Brent Venables
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ben Arbuckle
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Bates, Jay Valai

RANK: 13



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 13th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Armed Forces Bowl

OKLAHOMA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2020

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 10th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Danny Stut-
sman, QB Jackson Arnold, DB
Billy Bowman Jr., DL Ethan
Downs

KEY ADDITIONS: QB John
Mateer, RB Jaydn Ott, TE Will
Huggins, DL Marvin Jones Jr.,
LB Kendal Daniels

OFFENSE: Very few teams had a more dis-
appointing offensive campaign in 2024 than
Oklahoma. The Sooners cycled through multiple
play callers throughout the year and ultimately
hired Washington State OC Ben Arbuckle to
revitalize the unit in 2025.

Arbuckle brings with him Washington State star
QB John Mateer, a Heisman candidate with the
talent to completely change Oklahoma's trajec-
tory. The key will be whether Mateer's skillset
can translate effectively against the elevated
level of SEC competition.

The RB room received a major late-spring
upgrade with the addition of Cal standout Jaydn
Ott. Though Ott battled through injuries last sea-
son, he's proven to be one of the most dynamic
backs in the country when healthy.



Eli Bowen

Parker Thune / A to Z Sports

WR play was abysmal last year—largely due to
injuries—but the Sooners are expected to get
key weapons back, including Purdue trans-
fer Deion Burks, who missed most of 2024.
Arkansas-Pine Bluff transfer Javonnie Gibson is
a name to watch after a monster season in the
FCS, posting 1,200 yards and 9 TDs.

Oklahoma's offensive collapse was largely
rooted in poor O-line play, and this remains the
team's biggest red flag heading into the sea-
son. Depth is still a concern, and they'll need
multiple young players to take major leaps in
development for this unit to hold up.

DEFENSE: Despite significant attrition, Okla-
homa still produced a solid defensive season
under Brent Venables, and there's reason to be-
lieve they'll take another step forward in 2025.

The Sooners landed a major portal prize in
All-ACC DL Marvin Jones Jr. from Florida State,
who joins a strong defensive front led by All-
SEC DE R Mason Thomas. Perhaps the biggest
offseason win was convincing rising star DT
David Stone to stay in Norman, giving them elite
depth in the trenches.

At LB, the loss of Danny Stutsman stings, but
the return of juniors Kobie McKinzie and Kip
Lewis keeps this group well-stocked with expe-
rience and upside.

The secondary will again be a strength, an-
chored by Eli Bowen following a standout fresh-
man year. Safeties Peyton Bowen and Robert
Spears-Jennings form one of the better duos in
the country, and the Sooners are counting on
big sophomore leaps from Devon Jordan, Jay-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Illinois State
Sept. 6	Michigan
Sept. 13	@ Temple
Sept. 20	Auburn
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Kent State
Oct. 11	Texas
Oct. 18	@ South Carolina
Oct. 25	Ole Miss
Nov. 1	@ Tennessee
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Alabama
Nov. 22	Missouri
Nov. 29	LSU

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	10/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	87/100

dan Hardy, and Michael Boganowski to round
out for the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: Oklahoma's first SEC season
spiraled in the second half, resulting in the pro-
gram's first losing record since 1998. The root
cause was a broken offense, which the staff
addressed aggressively in the offseason.

Venables didn't just bring in fresh talent—he
brought in proven production, both on the field
and in the coaching ranks. But the big unknown
is whether those pieces will hold up in the brutal
weekly grind of the SEC.

O-line play remains the most pressing con-
cern, and unless that group stabilizes, even a
high-octane scheme and talented skill players
may not be enough to lift the Sooners. There's
plenty to like on paper, but with one of the most
difficult schedules in the nation and lingering
questions in the trenches, Oklahoma remains a
high-variance team heading into 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (5-3)



OLE MISS REBELS

HEAD COACH: Lane Kiffin
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Weis Jr., Joe Cox
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Golding, Bryan Brown

RANK: 31

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: 11th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Gator Bowl

OLE MISS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1963

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 113th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Jaxson Dart, DL Walter Nolen, WR Tre Harris, DB Trey Amos, DL Princely Umanmielen

KEY ADDITIONS: LB Princewill Umanmielen, DL Da'Shawn Womack, DB Ricky Fletcher, WR De'Zhaun Stribling

OFFENSE: Ole Miss featured arguably the best offense in the country in 2024, but they'll face a serious challenge this fall with just four returning starters.

The QB battle will be front and center. Sophomore Austin Simmons has patiently waited behind Jaxson Dart and could be the Rebels' next breakout signal-caller. However, don't count out Trinidad Chambliss, a dual-threat phenom who dominated at Ferris State.

The RB room is deep but lacks a proven alpha. Logan Diggs and Domonique Thomas headline the group, though neither has posted standout numbers. Transfers Damien Taylor and Kewan Lacy add experience and depth.

Veteran WR De'Zhaun Stribling, a transfer from



Cayden Lee

The Rebel Walk

Oklahoma State, brings needed maturity to an otherwise green receiving corps. Sophomore Cayden Lee flashed serious upside last year and may emerge as the top target. The Rebels also loaded up on portal talent at WR, creating a wide-open race for playing time.

The O-line will be almost entirely rebuilt, with Diego Pounds as the only consistent starter returning. The staff brought in some reinforcements—most notably Patrick Kutas—but the unit remains short on starting experience, which could lead to early growing pains.

DEFENSE: The Ole Miss defense was championship-caliber in 2024, but they'll be without several top-tier defenders this season. DCs Pete Golding and Bryan Brown will have their hands full trying to match last year's production.

Jamarius Brown, a freshman All-American last year, steps into a major role at defensive tackle and could be the next star in the trenches. The Rebels still boast solid depth up front and bolstered their pass rush with LSU transfer Da'Shawn Womack, who adds explosiveness.

At LB, the dynamic duo of TJ Dudley and Santarine Perkins returns, giving Ole Miss a dependable core in the middle of the defense. They also landed Florida transfer Princewill Umanmielen, brother of 2024 All-SEC DE Princely Umanmielen, to boost their front seven.

The secondary will have a brand-new look—and that's a good thing for a unit that struggled with consistency. Washington State standout Kapena Gushiken and All-Freshman SEC DB Jaylon Braxton headline the revamped group.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Georgia State
Sept. 6	@ Kentucky
Sept. 13	Arkansas
Sept. 20	Tulane
Sept. 27	LSU
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Washington State
Oct. 18	@ Georgia
Oct. 25	@ Oklahoma
Nov. 1	South Carolina
Nov. 8	Citadel
Nov. 15	Florida
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 28	@ Mississippi State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	82/100

OVERVIEW: The 2024 Ole Miss squad was loaded but fell painfully short in three one-score losses, derailing what could have been a play-off run. Failing to capitalize on such a talented roster left a sour taste, but there's still belief in what this team can achieve.

Though they'll be less experienced at the skill positions, Lane Kiffin has a proven track record of developing talent and maximizing his offense—regardless of how raw it may look on paper. The tougher challenge will be compensating for the loss of last year's defensive game-wreckers. The staff was aggressive in the portal, but the "Landshark" defense doesn't inspire the same fear it did a season ago.

Ole Miss remains a dangerous and competitive team in the SEC, but with their talent gap from last year and a more demanding schedule, it's hard to see them staying in the title hunt. Their window for a true SEC championship run appears to have closed—at least for now.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (4-4)

SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

HEAD COACH: Shane Beamer
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Shula
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clayton White

RANK: 23



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: 19th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the
Citrus Bowl

SOUTH CAROLINA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1969

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 71st

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Kyle Kennard,
DB Nick Emmanwori, DL T. J.
Sanders, LB Demetrius Knight,
DL Tonka Hemmingway

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Rahsul
Faison, OL Boaz Stanley, DL Za-
vion Hardy, DB Brandon Cisse

OFFENSE: New offensive coordinator Mike Shula steps into a tough role trying to match the output that Dowell Loggains got from this unit in 2024. Fortunately for Shula, he inherits a loaded offense with key returners at nearly every position.

QB LaNorris Sellers saw his hype grow throughout his first season as a starter—and for good reason. The dual-threat talent is a rising superstar with legitimate Heisman potential.

The RB room adds a major weapon in All-MW performer Rahsul Faison, who torched defenses at Utah State the past two seasons. He joins veteran Oscar Adaway III to form a backfield with both power and burst.

Three of Sellers' top four WRs return, including



LaNorris Sellers

College Sports Network

Nyck Harbor, Mazeo Bennett Jr., and Jared Brown. All are poised for breakout seasons, with Harbor, in particular, flashing the tools to become one of the SEC's premier wideouts. TE Michael Smith also returns after playing a significant role last season, and should be even more involved in Shula's scheme.

The O-line takes a step forward in experience, anchored by Josiah Thompson, who returns at tackle after starting as a true freshman. There are no seniors in the starting unit, but the addition of Troy transfer Boaz Stanley at center brings experience and leadership from a run-heavy system that could benefit South Carolina's ground game.

DEFENSE: Clayton White orchestrated one of the most dramatic defensive turnarounds in the country last year, but he'll have to rebuild a fearsome pass rush that was the backbone of the Gamecocks' success.

The D-line still has top-tier talent, led by elite edge rusher Dylan Stewart and Bryan Thomas Jr., who was third on the team in sacks. They've also added depth with two transfer DTs and Charlotte transfer Demon Clowney, a highly coveted addition.

At LB, the Gamecocks are light on experience but not on potential. True sophomore Fred Johnson and Alabama transfer Justin Okoronkwo are both breakout candidates, and there's optimism that this group could evolve into a real strength.

The secondary loses standout safety Nick Emmanwori, which is a tough blow for a group

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 31	Virginia Tech
Sept. 6	SC State
Sept. 13	Vanderbilt
Sept. 20	@ Missouri
Sept. 27	Kentucky
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ LSU
Oct. 18	Oklahoma
Oct. 25	Alabama
Nov. 1	@ Ole Miss
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Texas A&M
Nov. 22	Coastal Carolina
Nov. 29	Clemson

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	85/100

that occasionally gave up big plays in 2024. Even so, NC State transfer Brandon Cisse helps at CB, while returning safeties DQ Smith and Peyton Williams bring continuity and familiarity.

OVERVIEW: Shane Beamer's Gamecocks rode a wave of late-season momentum into the play-off conversation last year, thanks in large part to due to playing "Beamer Ball." While it's difficult to define exactly what that is, South Carolina's 13-4 record in November under Beamer tells the story—they finish strong.

That finishing power can also be seen as a weakness, though, since South Carolina has yet to put together a complete season. But 2025 could be the year that changes.

This offense has top-tier upside, and if the defense can come close to replicating last year's dominance in the trenches, the Gamecocks will again be among the SEC's most dangerous teams.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-3)



TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

HEAD COACH: Josh Heupel
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joey Halzle
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Banks

RANK: 36

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: 9th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost in the CFP First Round

TENNESSEE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1998

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 58th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL James Pearce Jr., DL Omarr Norman-Lott, WR Dont'e Thornton, RB Dylan Sampson, QB Nico Iamaleava

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Wendell Moe Jr., OL David Sanders Jr., QB Joey Aguilar, WR Travis Smith Jr.

OFFENSE: Josh Heupel and Joey Halzle have consistently produced high-powered offenses at Tennessee, but finding balance has been a recent challenge.

After a well-documented NIL saga filled with drama, the Volunteers landed former App State QB Joey Aguilar as their new starter. Aguilar, a multi-year starter in Boone, brings experience and poise, though redshirt freshman Jake Merklinger remains a viable option and could see time if the offense stalls.

The RB room will look to replace Dylan Sampson with a committee approach. Sophomore DeSean Bishop and Peyton Lewis both saw backup reps last season, while Duke transfer Star Thomas joins the fold after a strong campaign with the Blue Devils.

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Mike Matthews

Terry A. Lambert / Rocky Top Talk

WR will be a major area of transition, with Tennessee relying on a young group. Chris Brazzell II is the top returning pass-catcher, but true freshmen Travis Smith Jr. and Radarious Jackson are strong candidates to earn early snaps in a wide-open rotation.

The O-line loses all but one regular starter, returning only Lance Heard. However, there's optimism thanks to the arrival of five-star true freshman David Sanders Jr., who could start immediately. Junior transfer Wendell Moe Jr. also figures to play a significant role in the rebuild.

DEFENSE: Tim Banks has completely transformed this defense into a strength, and the Volunteers enter 2025 hoping to build on last year's standout performance with a solid core returning.

The D-line won't have the same elite depth as it did in 2024, but if healthy, it can still be dominant. Dominic Bailey and Bryson Eason headline the group with All-SEC potential and will be relied on heavily to set the tone up front.

LB is thinner, but Tennessee has two talented starters in Jeremiah Telander and Arion Carter. Depth will be tested here, and freshmen may be called on to contribute early. Keeping Telander and Carter on the field will be vital this year.

In the secondary, All-American DB Jermod McCoy returns but is expected to miss the start of the season while rehabbing a torn ACL. Early on, the Vols will lean on experienced safeties like Andre Turrentine and CB Rickey Gibson III. Sophomores Boo Carter and Edrees Farrow showed flashes as freshmen and are now

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Syracuse
Sept. 6	East Tennessee St
Sept. 13	Georgia
Sept. 20	UAB
Sept. 27	@ Mississippi State
Oct. 4	Arkansas
Oct. 11	@ Alabama
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Kentucky
Nov. 1	Oklahoma
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	New Mexico State
Nov. 22	@ Florida
Nov. 29	Vanderbilt

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	81/100

expected to take on bigger roles in a secondary that could be special if everything clicks.

OVERVIEW: Following their first-ever College Football Playoff appearance, Tennessee enters 2025 with less chatter about on-field production and more about offseason drama—namely the messy QB situation.

The Vols scrambled to land Aguilar after whiffing on other targets, which leaves some vulnerability under center. While Aguilar is a solid option, he wasn't Tennessee's top choice. Even before the QB saga, there were legitimate concerns about depth in the front seven and key players recovering from injury. With less margin for error and more youth across the board, 2025 will test Heupel and his staff's ability to coach up a roster in transition.

A return to the playoff isn't out of the question—but it will take some of the best work yet from this coaching staff.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (3-5)

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

HEAD COACH: Mike Elko
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Collin Klein, Holmon Wiggins
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Bateman, Jordan Peterson

RANK: 10



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Las Vegas Bowl

TEXAS A&M AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1998

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 6th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Shemar Stewart, DL Nic Scourton, DL Shemar Turner, DB BJ Mayes, WR Jahdae Walker

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Mario Craver, WR KC Concepcion, TE Amari Niblack, DL T. J. Searcy, DB Jordan Shaw



Terry Bussey

Chris Swann / The Battalion

The Aggies scored one of the portal's biggest prizes in WR KC Concepcion from NC State. He joins a group that also returns dynamic sophomore Terry Bussey, an elite prospect with major upside who's already flashed big-play ability.

Up front, the O-line offers plenty of returning production. Trey Zuhn III, Ar'maj Reed-Adams, and Chase Bisontis all return, giving A&M a strong foundation and much-needed stability.

DEFENSE: Texas A&M underwhelmed on defense in 2024, finishing with the third-most yards allowed per game in the SEC. That performance was a head-scratcher given their raw talent, and it's something they must reverse if they're going to contend. Improvement is expected this year as Mike Elko taps into his defensive coaching roots.

Despite losing several D-line standouts, the Aggies are confident that portal additions like Florida's TJ Searcy and Iowa State's Tyler Onyedim can fill the void and provide immediate help up front.

At LB, both Taurean York and Scooby Williams return. Though this unit struggled with consistency last year, added experience and growth give reason to believe in a breakout season, where they'll become one of the best groups out there.

The secondary gave up a ton of yards last fall, but there's real promise in this group. All-SEC DB Will Lee III and Dezz Ricks return at corner, and Washington transfer Jordan Shaw—one of the top DBs in the portal—arrives after a standout year with the Huskies.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	UTSA
Sept. 6	Utah State
Sept. 13	@ Notre Dame
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Auburn
Oct. 4	Mississippi State
Oct. 11	Florida
Oct. 18	@ Arkansas
Oct. 25	@ LSU
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Missouri
Nov. 15	South Carolina
Nov. 22	Samford
Nov. 28	@ Texas

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	9/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	90/100

OVERVIEW: Texas A&M squandered a golden opportunity last season, going winless in SEC play during November and falling out of the conference title race. The collapse was disappointing, but the rash of injuries offers a clear explanation.

Now, with a clear QB1, a loaded RB room, and one of the SEC's most experienced O-lines, the Aggies enter 2025 with the pieces in place to make serious noise. Klein's second year leading the offense should bring added cohesion and identity.

Defensively, while the pure talent may not match last season's group, this version of the unit could outperform it thanks to more defined roles and key transfer additions that can grow under this coaching staff.

If they stay healthy and get a few favorable bounces, Texas A&M is absolutely capable of making a run at the Playoff.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (5-3)

OFFENSE: The Aggies battled through QB injuries and a brutal schedule to still post respectable offensive numbers. Collin Klein will look to build upon that foundation entering his second season as the play-caller.

Texas A&M heads into 2025 with confidence at QB, thanks to Marcel Reed. He was by far the most consistent option under center last year and is poised to take another step forward. UAB transfer Jacob Zeno provides quality depth behind him.

Le'Veon Moss looked like one of the SEC's top rushers before a November injury derailed his season. He returns to lead a loaded RB room that includes Amari Daniels—who rushed for over 600 yards last year—and Rueben Owens, who is back after missing most of 2024.



TEXAS LONGHORNS

HEAD COACH: Steve Sarkisian
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kyle Flood, A. J. Milwee
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Kwiatkowski, Johnny Nansen

RANK: 3

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 13-3 (7-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: 4th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Cotton Bowl

TEXAS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2023

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 103rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Quinn Ewers, OL Kelvin Banks Jr., DB Jahdae Barron, WR Matthew Golden, DB Andrew Mukuba

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Cole Brevard, WR Kaliq Lockett, DL Travis Shaw, LB Brad Spence, DB Zelus Hicks

OFFENSE: Despite a rash of untimely injuries at the skill positions, Texas still produced a strong offensive campaign in 2024. Steve Sarkisian's elite playcalling remains one of the program's greatest assets.

The Arch Manning era officially begins in 2025. Through two starts and occasional relief duty last season, Manning showcased flashes of his elite potential—and now steps in as the full-time QB with immense expectations.

Injuries decimated the Longhorns' RB room last year, but that opened the door for the emergence of Quintrevion Wisner. Texas also welcomes back CJ Baxter, who was expected to be the feature back in 2024 before missing the entire season. Expect Baxter to carve out his starting role again this season if he's healthy.



Arch Manning

Wescott Elberts / Burnt Orange Nation

WR Ryan Wingo had a breakout freshman year and will likely be Manning's go-to target. The Longhorns also brought in an elite group of freshmen pass-catchers, headlined by five-star Kaliq Lockett and four-star Jaime Ffrench, who could factor in early.

The O-line is Texas' biggest question mark on offense. DJ Campbell is the lone returning starter, and while the group is talented, a lack of game reps could lead to some early season growing pains. Ironically, the unit's good health in 2024 limited valuable depth development.

DEFENSE: Texas leaned heavily on its defense last season under Pete Kwiatkowski and Johnny Nansen, and they'll need to do so again in 2025. This will be achievable with the returning talent the Longhorns have across the board.

Transfer NT Cole Brevard is a powerful presence in the middle and fits the mold of what Texas expects up front. Sophomore Alex January and edge rushers Ethan Burke and Colton Vasek form a D-line that should once again be a major strength.

The LB corps returns virtually every key contributor from 2024. Anthony Hill Jr., Colin Simmons, Trey Moore, and Liona Lefau create a fast, versatile group that makes life difficult for opposing offenses in the middle of the field.

Even with the departures of Jahdae Barron and Andrew Mukuba, the secondary remains in great shape. Veterans Michael Taaffe and Jaylon Guilbeau bring leadership, while breakout sophomore Jordon Johnson-Rubell headlines a talented group of young DBs.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Ohio State
Sept. 6	San Jose State
Sept. 13	UTEP
Sept. 20	Sam Houston
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Florida
Oct. 11	Oklahoma
Oct. 18	@ Kentucky
Oct. 25	@ Mississippi State
Nov. 1	Vanderbilt
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Georgia
Nov. 22	Arkansas
Nov. 28	Texas A&M

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	14/15
RUNNINGBACK:	9/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
LINEBACKERS:	10/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	92/100

OVERVIEW: Texas had all the ingredients to win a national title in 2024, but ran into an Ohio State team that peaked at the perfect time.

Even with 12 players heading to the NFL Draft, Sarkisian has this program operating at a level where they can reload every offseason. Texas lost 11 draftees the previous year and still made the CFP semis—it's the new standard in Austin.

Now it's Arch Manning's turn to lead the way. All signs point to him being worth the hype, and Sarkisian will have him in a system built for success. The key will be how quickly the young QB and his supporting cast grow into their roles.

Defensively, Texas proved they could hold up against a full SEC slate. They've got the battle scars—and the confidence—to show for it this season.

Texas is not just back; they're a bona fide national title contender once again in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (6-2)

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

HEAD COACH: Clark Lea
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Beck
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Gregory

RANK: 45



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Birmingham Bowl

VANDERBILT AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: SEC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1923

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 8th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Quincy Skinner, OL Steven Losoya, WR Micah Bell, QB Nate Johnson, OL Joshua Raymond

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Trent Hudson, OL Isaia Glass, OL Sterling Porcher, DB CJ Heard, DB Jordan Matthews

OFFENSE: Despite finishing last in the SEC in yards per game, Tim Beck's offense delivered in key moments down the stretch. As is the case most seasons in Nashville, Beck faces the weekly challenge of scheming around a significant talent gap.

It's hard to find a player more essential to his team than Diego Pavia is to Vanderbilt. The offense flows through him—he's a dynamic playmaker both through the air and on the ground. The team's success will once again ride on the shoulders of their star QB.

Vanderbilt has struggled to establish a consistent run game outside of Pavia's contributions. Two-year starting RB Sedrick Alexander returns, but has yet to break out, averaging just under four yards per carry each of the past two



Diego Pavia

College Sports Network

seasons. Some improvement in this department could go a long way toward improving the offense.

Pavia will benefit from continuity in the passing game, with top targets TE Eli Stowers and WR Junior Sherrill returning. The Commodores also made a savvy portal addition by bringing in WR Trent Hudson, who already has established chemistry with Pavia at New Mexico State.

The O-line needed reinforcement, and Vanderbilt responded by upgrading through the transfer portal. All-CUSA center Jordan White arrives to anchor a retooled unit, with hopes he can spark a more efficient run game.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Steve Gregory will take over playcalling duties in 2025 after head coach Clark Lea handled them last season.

Vanderbilt's D-line was one of the program's most pleasant surprises in 2024, outperforming expectations and setting the tone early with a strong outing against Virginia Tech. The unit returns key contributors Glenn Seabrooks III and Yilanan Ouattara on the interior.

At LB, Vanderbilt returns all of its top tacklers. Bryan Longwell, Langston Patterson, Randon Fontenette, and Nicholas Rinaldi each recorded at least 50 total stops last season and form the backbone of this defense. There's legitimate buzz that this group could lead the unit to another step forward.

The secondary was a weak link last year, and remains a question mark heading into 2025.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Charleston So.
Sept. 6	@ Virginia Tech
Sept. 13	@ South Carolina
Sept. 20	Georgia State
Sept. 27	Utah State
Oct. 4	@ Alabama
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	LSU
Oct. 25	Missouri
Nov. 1	@ Texas
Nov. 8	Auburn
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	Kentucky
Nov. 29	@ Tennessee

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	15/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	76/100

Still, there are reasons for optimism. Freshman All-American Dontae Carter returns, and the Commodores added Tennessee transfer Jordan Matthews and All-AAC DB CJ Heard to shore up the back end.

OVERVIEW: Few predicted Vanderbilt's SEC surge in 2024—especially not one that began with an upset win over Alabama.

That breakout campaign breathed life into the program, which, for the first time in the portal era, gained more talent than it lost and finished with its highest-rated transfer class ever.

Some players simply elevate everyone around them. Diego Pavia gives Vanderbilt that intangible edge—the kind that makes his team believe it can beat anyone when he's on the field.

Ignore the stat sheets and the recruiting rankings. The Commodores are a legitimate threat to be competitive again in the SEC this fall.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (2-6)



AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. ARMY	12-2 (8-0)
2. TULANE	9-5 (7-1)
3. NAVY	10-3 (6-2)
4. MEMPHIS	11-2 (6-2)
5. EAST CAROLINA	8-5 (5-3)
6. SOUTH FLORIDA	7-6 (4-4)
7. UTSA	7-6 (4-4)
8. CHARLOTTE	5-7 (4-4)
9. NORTH TEXAS	6-7 (3-5)
10. RICE	4-8 (3-5)
11. TEMPLE	3-9 (2-6)
12. UAB	3-9 (2-6)
13. FLORIDA ATL.	3-9 (1-7)
14. TULSA	3-9 (1-7)

Army dominated the American in its inaugural season, going undefeated in conference play and notching several blowout victories along the way. Few opponents had an answer for the Black Knights' disciplined, clock-controlling offensive approach.

For most of the season, **Tulane** looked like the team to beat in the American, despite a pair of early non-conference losses. The Green Wave faltered down the stretch, but Jon Sumrall's debut campaign as Tulane's head coach was still a clear success.

Navy made a noticeable leap in Brian Newberry's second season, falling just short of the conference title game due to a few tight losses. The Midshipmen consistently rose to the occasion in their biggest moments, and notched big time wins over Memphis, Army and Oklahoma in their bowl game.

A star-studded **Memphis** squad flashed its potential at times, including a dominant season-ending win over Tulane. But the Tigers' defensive inconsistency ultimately derailed what could've been a championship-caliber year. For Memphis fans, 2024 will remain a major "what-if."

East Carolina parted ways with Mike Houston midway through the year, but interim coach Blake Harrell steadied the ship, guiding the Pirates to five wins in their final six games—including a signature bowl victory over NC State. Harrell was rewarded with the full-time role, and will lead the program into the 2025 season.

South Florida battled through a brutal schedule and key injuries but still finished above .500 and reached a bowl under Alex Golesh. While the season may have fallen short of preseason expectations, it was a commendable effort



Eli Heidenreich

Naval Academy Athletics

given the circumstances. The Bulls are poised for a bounceback with better injury and turnover luck in 2025.

UTSA overcame a 2-4 start to earn another bowl appearance, a testament to the culture Jeff Traylor has built. Even in a transition year, the Roadrunners proved their resilience and stability as a program.

Charlotte looked better on paper than its record showed in 2024, but close losses and a 3-7 start led to the firing of Biff Poggi. The 49ers did manage to close the season strong with back-to-back wins, reaching .500 in conference. The Poggi era will be remembered for its odd and unpredictable ride and many bizarre storylines off the field.

North Texas once again fielded the American's most explosive offense, but major defensive issues persisted. There were a few signs of growth on that side of the ball, but not nearly enough to complement their scoring prowess, which was ultimately what led them to a bowl.

Rice finally moved on from Mike Bloomgren midway through another disappointing season. The Owls missed a bowl for the fifth time in seven years under his watch, bringing a frustrating tenure to a close. The Owls did notch a pair of solid victories under interim Pete Alamar, but they opted to go in a different direction for their permanent head coach.

Temple showed some flashes of progress, including a pair of conference wins and a quality non-conference victory over Utah State. Nevertheless, Stan Drayton was surprisingly let go in

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 28	ECU @ NC ST
Aug. 28	BSU @ USF
Aug. 30	FAU @ MD
Aug. 30	RICE @ ULL
Aug. 30	NWSTRN @ TU
Aug. 30	UTSA @ TAMU
Sept. 6	ARMY @ KSU
Sept. 6	UNC @ CLT
Sept. 6	TU @ USA
Sept. 6	TX ST @ UTSA
Sept. 13	WAZZU @ UNT
Sept. 20	BYU @ ECU
Sept. 20	ARKY @ MEM
Sept. 20	TU @ MISS
Nov. 8	NAVY @ ND

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

JEFF MONKEN, ARMY	A+
BIFF POGGI, CLT	D+
MIKE HOUSTON, ECU	D-
TOM HERMAN, FAU	F
RYAN SILVERFIELD, MEM	B+
BRIAN NEWBERRY, NAVY	A
ERIC MORRIS, UNT	B-
MIKE BLOOMGREN, RICE	D
ALEX GOLESH, USF	C
STAN DRAYTON, TEMPLE	D
JON SUMRALL, TU	A-
KEVIN WILSON, TULSA	D-
TRENT DILFER, UAB	F
JEFF TRAYLOR, UTSA	C+

November, just days after a win over FAU.

Trent Dilfer and **UAB** hoped to take a step forward in 2024, but instead saw regression. The Blazers were uncompetitive in most of their American matchups, and Dilfer will enter 2025 squarely on the hot seat.

FAU entered the season with high hopes of competing for a title but instead imploded down the stretch. A six-game losing streak sealed the fate of Tom Herman, who was let go after a disastrous campaign.

Tulsa capped off a rough season by parting ways with Kevin Wilson near the end of his second year. The Golden Hurricane endured multiple blowout losses but did score a memorable upset over UTSA that stood out in an otherwise disappointing season.

AMERICAN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Blake Horvath, NAVY

OPOY: Reese Poffenbarger, NORTH TEXAS

DPOY: Maurice Westmoreland, TULANE

COACH OF THE YEAR: Eric Morris, NORTH TEXAS

1. TULANE The Green Wave secured an elite transfer portal class by Group of Five standards, positioning themselves as a top-tier contender in the AAC. Among the Group of Five CFP hopefuls, Tulane leads the pack this season.

2. NAVY The Midshipmen return a dangerous blend of key contributors and strong coaching in 2025. After an impressive 2024 campaign, they'll have every opportunity to build on that success. Favorably, Navy won't face a team that finished above .500 last season until their ninth game, positioning them well for a hot start.

3. UTSA Following a step back last year, UTSA reloaded offensively during the offseason and looks ready to contend for a conference title once again. The Roadrunners' main concern remains on defense, where noticeable improvement will be necessary to take the next step.

4. SOUTH FLORIDA The Bulls look excellent on paper yet again and will enter the fall with a chance to deliver a statement win during their tough non-conference schedule. South Florida is due for better injury and turnover luck in 2025, and the return of QB Byrum Brown provides much-needed stability at the helm.

5. NORTH TEXAS There's little doubt North Texas will feature one of the American's top offenses once again, returning a large chunk of last year's production. Eric Morris' high-octane system has become a magnet for transfers hoping to thrive in a pass-friendly scheme. However, the defense remains a question mark after ranking last in the conference in yards allowed. New DC Skyler Cassity arrives from Sam Houston in hopes of changing that.

6. MEMPHIS The Tigers rank 119th nationally in returning production and will rely on several unproven players on offense. Even so, the system in place should keep Memphis productive on that side of the ball. The real challenge lies on



Miles Coleman

Marco Barerra / Denton-Record Chronicle

defense, where they'll need to be competent to stay in the conference title hunt.

7. ARMY After an undefeated debut in the American, Army felt the weight of success this offseason, losing multiple key contributors to graduation and the transfer portal. The Black Knights still offer a high floor as a service academy program, but enter 2025 with far more unknowns than a year ago.

8. EAST CAROLINA The Pirates are riding the momentum from a strong finish to 2024 under head coach Blake Harrell, who earned the full-time gig after serving as interim. With several new starters on defense, this season will be revealing in terms of how Harrell plans to shape the program long-term.

9. FLORIDA ATLANTIC There's significant excitement in Boca Raton around new head coach Zach Kittley and his high-octane run-and-shoot offense. Kittley's rapid rise—from FCS offensive coordinator to FBS head coach in just five seasons—makes him one of the more intriguing hires in the country.

10. RICE New head coach Scott Abell brings a winning pedigree from Davidson along with a distinct run-heavy offensive approach. While the Owls will feature plenty of new faces, there's some valuable returning continuity on offense that could help smooth the transition.

11. CHARLOTTE The 49ers made a splash by hiring Tim Albin fresh off a MAC title at Ohio. While his arrival sparks optimism, Albin wasn't able to bring either of his coordinators with him, which could present growing pains as he

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 20	UNT @ ARMY
Sept. 25	ARMY @ ECU
Oct. 11	RICE @ UTSA
Oct. 11	ECU @ TU
Oct. 18	ARMY @ TU
Oct. 18	FAU @ USF
Oct. 18	UTSA @ UNT
Oct. 25	USF @ MEM
Oct. 25	FAU @ NAVY
Nov. 6	UTSA @ USF
Nov. 7	TU @ MEM
Nov. 15	MEM @ ECU
Nov. 15	USF @ NAVY
Nov. 29	RICE @ USF
Nov. 29	NAVY @ MEM

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (60)	MEMPHIS
2. (65)	SOUTH FLORIDA
3. (69)	TULANE
4. (74)	EAST CAROLINA
5. (84)	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
6. (101)	RICE
7. (108)	UTSA
8. (110)	TULSA
9. (111)	NORTH TEXAS
10. (123)	TEMPLE
11. (125)	UAB
12. (130)	ARMY
13. (132)	NAVY
14. (144)	CHARLOTTE

installs his system in year one.

12. UAB Trent Dilfer enters a pivotal third season where results matter. The Blazers will look to replicate some of their offensive success from last year while beginning a major rebuild on the defensive side of the ball.

13. TEMPLE Temple made a bold move by hiring K.C. Keeler away from Sam Houston. The Owls are hoping his championship pedigree will quickly translate and inject new life into a program looking for direction.

14. TULSA New head coach Tre Lamb wasted no time reshaping the roster, bringing in a large group of transfers to elevate the program's competitiveness. There's potential for early flashes under his leadership.



ARMY BLACK KNIGHTS

HEAD COACH: Jeff Monken
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Cody Worley
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nate Woody

RANK: 77

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 12-2 (8-0)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: 21st

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Independence Bowl

ARMY AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 86th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3 offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Elo Madozie, DB Donavon Platt, RB Kanye Udoh, QB Bryson Daily, WR Casey Reynolds

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Sam Hayward, QB Seth Shigg, DL Zachary Green, DB Max Phenicie, OL Zak Stoilov

OFFENSE: Army's offensive surge in 2024 stemmed from subtle yet effective tweaks under first-year offensive coordinator Cody Worley, making his debut campaign a resounding success. Entering year two, the challenge will be replacing almost every key contributor—but that's exactly what the triple-option system is designed to do.

With First Team All-AAC QB Bryson Daily graduating, the offense now turns to senior Dewayne Coleman. Coleman saw valuable playing time last season, including a start in a win over Air Force, and is well-prepared to take the reins.

Although Army's top running back transferred out, the Black Knights return a veteran trio in Noah Short, Hayden Reed, and Jaek Rendina—each with game experience and the ability to



Andon Thomas

Army West Point Athletics

carry the load. There's no reason why this won't be one of the nation's top running games again in 2025.

The passing game remains a secondary component of the offense—Army attempted just 122 passes last season—but when needed, it can be effective. Senior WR Liam Fortner and TE Parker Poloskey will be key targets in those limited but crucial moments.

Last year's offensive line was elite, leading the most efficient rushing attack in the nation and winning the Joe Moore Award. Only two starters return, but the unit is expected to again be disciplined and physical, as is tradition in this program.

DEFENSE: Statistically, Army had the AAC's best defense in 2024, an impressive feat in their first season in the conference. Longtime coordinator Nate Woody continues to deliver strong, consistent results.

The defensive line will look for new leaders this year, though there are promising candidates. Nose guard Matt Gemma logged meaningful snaps last season and will likely rotate with Kody Harris-Miller at a key position in Army's front. Senior Jack Latore returns as a disruptive presence off the edge.

At linebacker, the Black Knights bring back two standouts in Andon Thomas—an All-AAC performer—and Kalib Fortner, who tallied 76 tackles last season. This duo anchors one of the best LB units in the league.

Army allowed just under 190 passing yards

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Tarleton State
Sept. 6	@ Kansas State
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	North Texas
Sept. 25	@ East Carolina
Oct. 4	@ UAB
Oct. 11	Charlotte
Oct. 18	@ Tulane
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Air Force
Nov. 8	Temple
Nov. 22	Tulsa
Nov. 28	@ UTSA
Dec. 13	Navy

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	64/100

per game last year, ranking fourth in the AAC. Veterans Casey Larkin and Justin Weaver return to lead a senior-heavy secondary that will be one of the toughest units to throw against in the league.

OVERVIEW: Army's transition to the AAC went smoother than anyone could've anticipated. The Black Knights steamrolled the competition in 2024, with their only loss to a league opponent coming in a non-conference matchup.

Though they lost more starters than usual—especially via the transfer portal—the Black Knights are built to reload, not rebuild. A defense loaded with senior leadership should set the tone, and most AAC opponents still appeared unprepared for Army's relentless triple-option attack.

If Dewayne Coleman proves steady at QB and the rebuilt offensive line holds up, a repeat AAC title run is well within reach.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (5-3)

CHARLOTTE 49ERS

HEAD COACH: Tim Albin
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Fitch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nate Faanes, Kurt Mattix

RANK: 107



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

CHARLOTTE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 131st

RETURNING STARTERS: 1
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR O'Mega
Blake, DL Demon Clowney, P
Stephen Rusnak, DB Elijah
Culp, DL Colin Coates

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jayden
McGowan, OL Mason Bowers,
OL Devin Davis, RB Don Chaney
Jr., QB Conner Harrell, DL Jaylon
Johnson, LB Gavin Willis

OFFENSE: Tim Albin's first major move at Charlotte was naming Todd Fitch his offensive coordinator. Fitch served as an offensive analyst at LSU in 2024 after three seasons at Ohio State and brings valuable experience to the program.

The 49ers' QB room includes a pair of former power conference passers. Conner Harrell, a former four-star recruit and UNC backup, is the frontrunner to start. He's joined by fellow North Carolina native Grayson Loftis, who transferred in from Duke and adds further depth and competition.

What could have been a green running back group received a major boost with the addition of Don Chaney Jr. The Miami transfer spent last season at Louisville and has flashed all-conference potential throughout his career. He's



Henry Rutledge

Charlotte Athletics

poised to be a difference-maker for Charlotte's offense.

The WR corps underwent a complete makeover. As part of the rebuild, Charlotte added Tennessee transfer Nate Spillman and Jayden McGowan from Boston College. McGowan brings solid SEC experience, having posted over 800 yards in two seasons at Vanderbilt prior to his brief stint in Chestnut Hill.

Up front, center Johnny King is the lone returning starter on the offensive line. Kennesaw State transfer Mason Bowers, who started nine games in 2024, is expected to play a key role in stabilizing the unit.

DEFENSE: Albin brought two of his trusted assistants from Ohio—Nate Faanes and Kurt Mattix—to serve as co-defensive coordinators, providing schematic continuity and a proven system to lean on in year one.

The pass rush received a much-needed overhaul through the portal, with All-Ivy League standout Braden Mullen and JUCO product Jaylon Johnson joining the D-line. On the interior, Ayo Tifase and Zion Shockley will look to step into larger roles after a limited 2024.

Linebacker Reid Williford returns as Charlotte's top tackler from 2024, and he'll be joined by Bucknell transfer Gavin Willis at the Will spot. The 49ers also added a pair of depth pieces to round out the unit.

The secondary was a bright spot last season, and retaining Ja'Qurious Conley and Treyveon McGee will be key to sustaining that success.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Appalachian State
Sept. 6	North Carolina
Sept. 13	Monmouth
Sept. 18	Rice
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 3	@ South Florida
Oct. 11	@ Army
Oct. 18	Temple
Oct. 24	North Texas
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ East Carolina
Nov. 15	UTSA
Nov. 22	@ Georgia
Nov. 29	@ Tulane

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	56/100

Adding Caleb Curtain—an FCS All-American last season—could elevate this unit to one of the team's strengths.

OVERVIEW: Tim Albin arrives at Charlotte following a highly successful run at Ohio that included three straight 10-win seasons and a MAC title. The 49ers, who have just one bowl appearance in a decade at the FBS level, are hoping he can bring that same level of success to the Queen City.

Albin wasted no time reshaping the roster, targeting former power conference talent and standout players from the FCS and JUCO ranks.

While both of Albin's coordinators are new to their roles at this level, their familiarity with his system provides some stability. And after the chaotic Biff Poggi era, a more conventional approach may be just what Charlotte needs to start building long-term momentum.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (1-7)



EAST CAROLINA PIRATES

HEAD COACH: Blake Harrell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John David Baker
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Aldridge

RANK: 86

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Military Bowl

EAST CAROLINA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2009

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 107th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Shavon Revel
Jr., DB Eric Fletcher, LB Zakye
Baker, RB Rahjai Harris, WR
Chase Sowell

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jaquaize
Pettaway, OL Kyle Long, OL
Leivi Semaia, DB Teagan Wilk

OFFENSE: John David Baker returns as offensive coordinator and looks to replicate the success East Carolina's offense enjoyed down the stretch in 2024.

The Pirates return starting QB Katin Houser for his junior season. Houser took over the job in October and delivered several strong outings, including a five-touchdown performance against FAU. In a late spring portal addition, ECU brought in veteran signal-caller Mike Wright, whose experience at multiple programs gives them a solid backup option.

London Montgomery impressed as a true freshman and has likely secured the starting RB role heading into 2025. The Pirates added two transfer backs to round out the depth chart and build a well-rounded rotation.



Katin Houser

East Carolina Athletics

At WR, Anthony Smith led the team in receiving yards a season ago and returns as a reliable option on the outside. Fellow returner Yannick Smith adds another proven target, but the headliner might be Jaquaize Pettaway—a former four-star prospect who transferred in from Oklahoma.

East Carolina returns two starters on the offensive line: tackles Emmanuel Poku and Jimarion McCrimon. To help stabilize the interior, the Pirates dipped into the portal and landed Kyle Long, who brings multiple years of starting experience from Maryland.

DEFENSE: Blake Harrell brought in Auburn DE coach Josh Aldridge as the team's new defensive coordinator. Aldridge last held the DC title at Liberty in 2022 and is expected to bring a physical, structured identity to the group.

The D-line will look a lot different this year, with several key additions brought in to shore up the trenches. Transfers Xavier McIver, Justin Benton, and Rion Roseborough are expected to rotate heavily on the interior, while returners J.D. Lampley and Ryheem Craig—who each flashed upside last fall—will be counted on to bring pressure off the edge.

Linebacker is one of the youngest groups on the roster, and it will be a learning curve in 2025. Sophomore Kevon Merrell is expected to step into a leadership role after showing promise as a freshman, and the Pirates added additional depth through the portal.

The secondary could be a major strength. Ja'Marley Riddle and DeMarius Hines saw

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	@ NC State
Sept. 6	Campbell
Sept. 13	@ Coastal Carolina
Sept. 20	BYU
Sept. 25	Army
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	@ Tulane
Oct. 16	Tulsa
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Temple
Nov. 8	Charlotte
Nov. 15	Memphis
Nov. 22	@ UTSA
Nov. 29	@ Florida Atlantic

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	62/100

meaningful snaps last season as freshmen, and those reps will be invaluable heading into year two. The addition of former FCS All-American Jordy Lowery headlines a group of portal additions that should raise the unit's overall ceiling.

OVERVIEW: Blake Harrell enters his first season as East Carolina's full-time head coach after guiding the team to a strong finish in 2024 as interim. The blueprint is there—Boise State's Spencer Danielson followed a similar path last year and led the Broncos to a CFP appearance.

While ECU lost a fair amount of production, particularly on offense, there are still several intriguing pieces to work with on both sides of the ball.

This season will be about Harrell setting the tone for his tenure and laying the foundation for sustained success. If the Pirates can gel quickly, they could be in the mix in a wide-open American.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (5-3)

FAU OWLS

HEAD COACH: Zach Kittley
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: N/A
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brett Dewhurst

RANK: 93



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (1-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 13th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

FAU AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2019

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 112th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB CJ Campbell
Jr., DB CJ Heard, DB Jayden
Williams, DL Chison Ifeanyi, OL
Brayden Ramey

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Easton
Messer, QB Caden Veltkamp,
LB Leon Hart Jr., LB Tyler
Stolsky, DB Derrick Rogers

OFFENSE: Zach Kittley will take over playcalling duties in his first season as head coach, bringing a wave of anticipation around just how dynamic the Owls' offense could be in 2025. Kittley is one of the fastest rising coaches in the sport.

FAU landed a key transfer in QB Caden Veltkamp, who threw for over 3,000 yards and 25 touchdowns in his first season as a starter at Western Kentucky. He'll now lead Kittley's up-tempo, Run-and-Shoot-style attack and should be an excellent fit for what the staff wants to do through the air.

The RB room will be young, but not without potential. Gemari Sands and Xavier Terrell are the most experienced options and figure to form the one-two punch that will lead this run game.



Gemari Sands

247 Sports

Veltkamp's top target will be a familiar face in Easton Messer, who followed him from WKU and nearly eclipsed 800 yards receiving in 2024. Jabari Smith returns after a productive campaign last fall, while Virginia transfer JR Wilson Jr. adds more explosiveness to a revamped WR corps.

Up front, the Owls brought in a pair of new faces to bolster the O-line. Louisville transfer Madden Sanker and Bethune-Cookman stand-out Vincent Forney bring youth and upside, while veteran Alex Atcavage will be counted on to provide returning leadership as this unit gels.

DEFENSE: Kittley tabbed Brett Dewhurst as his defensive coordinator—a lesser-known hire who served as a defensive analyst at Coastal Carolina in 2024. He inherits a unit that struggled mightily last season and faces a steep climb to respectability.

Naejuan Barber is one of several Coastal Carolina players who followed Dewhurst to Boca Raton and will be a cornerstone for the defensive front. FAU returns Chison Ifeanyi and Eric Brantley Jr. on the edge, but this group must find ways to generate more pressure after a lackluster 2024.

Linebacker was a major focus this offseason, and the Owls responded by hitting the transfer portal hard. Minnesota's Tyler Stolsky and Marshall's Leon Hart Jr. bring FBS experience, while promising freshmen Robert Lee and Hector Chavez are names to watch this year.

The secondary will feel the loss of All-AAC DB CJ Heard, with Wendol Philord as the lone

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Maryland
Sept. 6	Florida A&M
Sept. 13	@ FIU
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Memphis
Oct. 4	@ Rice
Oct. 11	UAB
Oct. 18	@ South Florida
Oct. 25	@ Navy
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Tulsa
Nov. 15	@ Tulane
Nov. 22	UConn
Nov. 29	East Carolina

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	60/100

returning starter. Incoming Purdue transfer Derrick Rogers is among the young players expected to compete for a starting role despite limited experience last year.

OVERVIEW: After a pair of flashy but underwhelming hires, FAU went in a different direction by betting on the upside of Zach Kittley—a fast-rising coach with a strong offensive pedigree.

With Kittley calling plays and a proven QB-WR combo arriving from Western Kentucky, the Owls should be dangerous on offense right away. The defense, however, remains a big question mark. Dewhurst and his staff face a major rebuild, both in terms of scheme and personnel, and it may take time for results to follow.

Still, there's enough talent on this roster to engineer a quick turnaround. If the defense holds up, FAU could be back above .500 and back in bowl contention sooner than expected.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (4-4)



MEMPHIS TIGERS

HEAD COACH: Ryan Silverfield
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Cramsey, Larry Smith
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jordon Hankins, Spence Nowinsky

RANK: 73

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-2 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: 24th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Frisco Bowl

MEMPHIS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2019

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 119th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2 offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Roc Taylor, QB Seth Henigan, OL Xavier Hill, RB Mario Anderson Jr., LB Chandler Martin

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Brendon Lewis, TE Jerry Cross, WR Jadon Thompson, DL Rayyan Buell, LB Sam Brumfield

OFFENSE: Memphis featured one of the AAC's most explosive offenses last season, and offensive coordinator Tim Cramsey returns with hopes of replicating that success.

To bridge the gap at QB, the Tigers brought in veteran Nevada transfer Brendon Lewis. A capable dual-threat option, Lewis appears to be the frontrunner to start in 2025. Memphis also signed highly touted four-star freshman AJ Hill, who is viewed as the program's future at the position and will likely redshirt this fall.

Despite the departure of Mario Anderson Jr., the Tigers appear well-positioned at running back. Greg Desrosiers Jr. averaged over seven yards per carry in a limited role last season and flashed his versatility as a pass catcher. Makari Bodiford and others gained valuable experi-



William Whitlow Jr.

Memphis Athletics

ence last year and should round out a backfield that has the potential to surprise.

Memphis retooled its wide receiver corps by landing a handful of talented transfers from the power conferences. Jadon Thompson (Louisville) and CJ Smith (Purdue) will be in the mix right away, but perhaps the most impactful newcomer is tight end Jerry Cross, a former blue-chip recruit out of Penn State.

The O-line will be almost entirely new, with only a few returners like Chris Adams and Malachi Breland expected to retain starting roles. Several additions from the portal will compete for playing time, including All-Ivy League guard Austin Gentle.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Jordon Hankins made strides with this unit in 2024, but a pair of breakdowns in close games ultimately kept Memphis from reaching its full potential.

The Tigers return defensive end William Whitlow Jr., but the front line was rebuilt with transfer additions. Among the most intriguing is Colorado transfer Rayyan Buell, who missed most of last season due to injury but could emerge as a key piece if healthy.

Replacing Chandler Martin at linebacker was no easy task, but Memphis reloaded well. UAB transfer Everett Roussaw Jr. had a highly productive 2024, and Sam Brumfield comes in from Virginia Tech with proven starting experience. While the group loses a star, it may be even more experienced top to bottom.

The secondary also saw turnover, but the staff

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Chattanooga
Sept. 6	@ Georgia State
Sept. 13	@ Troy
Sept. 20	Arkansas
Sept. 27	@ Florida Atlantic
Oct. 4	Tulsa
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ UAB
Oct. 25	South Florida
Oct. 31	@ Rice
Nov. 7	Tulane
Nov. 15	@ East Carolina
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 27	Navy

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	66/100

stuck to its portal strategy and brought in Myles Pollard from Michigan and Jaylen Thompson from Stanford—two players with high upside.

OVERVIEW: There's no sugarcoating it—2024 was a missed opportunity for Memphis. The Tigers finished with 11 wins, but costly lapses against Navy and UTSA kept them out of both the AAC title game and the CFP conversation.

That squad featured several veteran leaders who have since graduated, leaving behind a roster that's far less seasoned heading into 2025. Even so, Memphis remains one of the AAC's best at attracting talent through the portal, and the staff did a commendable job filling key holes across the depth chart.

This may be framed as a transition year, but with the right chemistry and some breakout performances from newcomers, Memphis could absolutely find itself in the AAC title mix once again.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (5-3)

NAVY MIDSHIPMEN

HEAD COACH: Brian Newberry
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Drew Cronic
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: P. J. Volker

RANK: 54



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Armed Forces Bowl

NAVY AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 34th

RETURNING STARTERS : 7 offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: FB Daba Fofana, LB Colin Ramos, LB Kyle Jacob, DB Rayuan Lane III, DB Dashaun Peele

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Garrison Dibble, TE Merrick Barlow, OL Logan Wegman, TE Brayden Robinson, WR Jordan Collins, DB Sean Martin

OFFENSE: First-year offensive coordinator Drew Cronic brought much-needed balance to Navy's attack in 2024, lifting the unit from one of the AAC's lowest-scoring groups to a respectable middle-of-the-pack offense. With several key contributors back, there's reason to believe the Midshipmen can continue trending upward.

Senior QB Blake Horvath returns to lead the offense and has a chance to solidify his legacy as one of Navy's all-time greats at the position. Junior backup Braxton Woodson also saw meaningful reps last season and offers a versatile change of pace when needed.

The Midshipmen bring back three of their top four rushers, headlined by RB Eli Heidenreich, who averaged nearly seven yards per carry and brings big-play potential to the backfield.



Blake Horvath

Navy Sports

FB Alex Tecza, who logged the most carries in 2024, is back as a steady force in the option game.

Unlike traditional service academy offenses, Navy isn't afraid to put the ball in the air. They've attempted close to 200 passes in each of the last two seasons, and the return of their top two WRs, along with TEs Cody Howard and Jake Norris, gives them a reliable group of targets.

Only two starters return along the offensive line, but the Midshipmen's reputation for strong, disciplined play in the trenches remains intact. As always, the unit will be a linchpin in Navy's offensive success.

DEFENSE: Head coach Brian Newberry and defensive coordinator P.J. Volker once again crafted a gritty and opportunistic defense, particularly in conference play and the Commander-in-Chief's Trophy matchups.

The defensive line returns plenty of talent, with Luke Pirris and Griffen Willis bringing back experience and production after combining for impressive tackle and sack totals in 2024. Senior Landon Robinson anchors the interior, helping maintain Navy's stout run defense.

The linebacker unit will look a bit different this year with both starters gone. Marcus Bleazard is the most seasoned returner and steps into a larger role, while sophomore Parker MarcAnthony will be expected to grow into a key piece.

The secondary struggled at times last year but brings back multiple starters, creating optimism

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	VMI
Sept. 6	UAB
Sept. 13	@ Tulsa
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Rice
Oct. 4	Air Force
Oct. 11	@ Temple
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	Florida Atlantic
Nov. 1	@ North Texas
Nov. 8	@ Notre Dame
Nov. 15	South Florida
Nov. 27	@ Memphis
Dec. 13	Army

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	69/100

for improved cohesion. Corners Andrew Durhart and Irabonise Oniha will be leaned on heavily as they try to shore up the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: Navy made significant strides in Brian Newberry's second year, reaffirming the program's decision to embrace a new era of modernized triple-option football with more offensive flexibility.

With Horvath's experience under center, a strong supporting cast, and a dependable D-line, the Midshipmen look poised to take another step forward. The offense should be even more efficient and balanced in 2025, and the defense has a solid foundation despite some question marks on defense.

A manageable early schedule and returning talent across the board make Navy one of the AAC's most intriguing contenders. If the pieces come together as expected, the Midshipmen have the chops to compete for an AAC title.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (7-1)



NORTH TEXAS MEAN GREEN

HEAD COACH: Eric Morris
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jordan Davis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Skyler Cassity

RANK: 71

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the First Responder Bowl

NORTH TEXAS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2004

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 79th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Chandler
Morris, RB Shane Porter, WR
DT Sheffield, LB Jaylen Smith,
DB Jayden Hill

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Simeon
Evans, QB Reese Poffenbarger,
OL Ugonna Nnanna, DL Ethan
Day, LB Trey Fields

OFFENSE: Eric Morris and offensive coordinator Jordan Davis engineered a dominant offense for North Texas once again in 2024, and they return all the key ingredients to keep that momentum going in 2025.

The Mean Green enter the season with multiple QB options, headlined by Miami transfer and former Albany standout Reese Poffenbarger, who threw for 60 touchdowns over two seasons with the Great Danes. While Drew Mestemaker's inspiring bowl game performance earned him attention, he must wait for his next opportunity.

Despite the departure of Shane Porter, the rushing attack should remain strong with Makenzie McGill II poised to lead the charge. Adding depth and talent to the backfield is Missouri State transfer Jayden Becks.



Makenzie McGill II

North Texas Athletics

The receiving corps, while losing several staple contributors, gained a boost with the addition of Sam Houston's excellent pass catcher Simeon Evans. North Texas also returns Wyatt Young and Miles Coleman, both of whom showed promise as freshmen and are poised for breakout seasons.

The O-line remains a point of pride for the Mean Green, and several transfers have been brought in to uphold that tradition. Ugonna Nnanna, a multi-year starter for Virginia, and Jimto Obidegwu, who was a full-time starter at Kent State last year, will bring some experience and stability.

DEFENSE: The defensive side of the ball remains a work in progress for North Texas. After parting ways with their previous coordinator last season, the Mean Green turned to Sam Houston defensive coordinator Skyler Cassity to lead the transformation.

Cassity's impact should be felt immediately, beginning with the defensive line. Richard Outland Jr., who started at tackle for Sam Houston last season, followed Cassity to North Texas and will be a key presence inside. Briceon Hayes, another Sam Houston transfer who recorded five sacks last year, should help the pass rush.

At linebacker, junior Ethan Wesloski returns to anchor the unit, but the addition of Sam Houston starter Trey Fields injects much-needed experience and talent, which should translate into improved run defense.

North Texas's secondary struggled last year and will look to flip the script this season. Safety Evan Jackson is the lone returning starter, but

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Lamar
Sept. 6	@ Western Michigan
Sept. 13	Washington State
Sept. 20	@ Army
Sept. 27	South Alabama
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 10	South Florida
Oct. 18	UTSA
Oct. 24	@ Charlotte
Nov. 1	Navy
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ UAB
Nov. 22	@ Rice
Nov. 29	Temple

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	67/100

the defense added depth and experience with transfers like DJ Warnell Jr., who has seen stops at multiple Power Five programs and will start at the other safety spot.

OVERVIEW: Eric Morris's guidance helped North Texas reach a bowl game in 2024, marking progress for the program, but there remains plenty of ground to cover. The Mean Green's six wins last year were often against underwhelming competition.

The defense has been the primary Achilles' heel, and that imbalance has prevented the offense's impressive production from translating into consistent success. Skyler Cassity's arrival brings hope for immediate improvement, with a revamped defensive scheme and a wave of talented transfers that hope to make an impact.

If the defense can rise to the occasion and the offense continues to hum, North Texas could be on the verge of a significant turnaround.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (5-3)

RICE OWLS

HEAD COACH: Scott Abell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Vince Munch
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jon Kay

RANK: 100



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

RICE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2013

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 118th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Dean Connors, QB E. J. Warner, WR Matt Sykes, DB Gabriel Taylor, DB Sean Fresch

KEY ADDITIONS: DB Jerrick Harper, DB Max Lofy, WR Aaron Turner, OL Sean Sullivan, OL Cole Morgan

OFFENSE: Vince Munch, who served as the run game coordinator under Scott Abell at Davidson, has been promoted to offensive coordinator for Rice this season, though Abell will continue to call the plays.

The Owls will rely on redshirt freshman Drew Devillier to lead the offense at quarterback. Devillier saw limited action last year, struggling in his only start, but the coaching staff is hopeful the former three-star recruit will make a significant leap this season. In Abell's run heavy offense, they won't ask too much of their inexperienced QB.

Despite the loss of running back Dean Connors, Rice has a pair of capable backs in Quinton Jackson and Tajj Atkins, both of whom contributed as backups in 2024 and figure to be key



Drew Devillier

Rice Athletics

pieces in Abell's run-heavy offense.

At wide receiver, Rawson MacNeill and Landon Ransom-Goelz return from injury after missing all of last season; both were productive in 2023 and add much-needed experience. Cincinnati transfer Aaron Turner also joins the unit, providing a veteran presence for the Owls' passing game.

A cornerstone of Abell's offense is the offensive line, which struggled significantly with run blocking last season—one of the worst in the AAC. To address this, Rice added Yale transfer Sean Sillivan and Michigan transfer Cole Morgan, hoping these newcomers will provide the edge needed up front.

DEFENSE: Scott Abell's decision to promote Jon Kay from within the existing coaching staff to defensive coordinator signals a commitment to continuity and building on the foundation already in place.

The defensive front retains some key pieces, including tackle Elroyal Morris III and defensive end Michael Daley. While Rice's run defense was serviceable last year, several top contributors must be replaced.

Kay's return also ensured the presence of linebackers Ty Morris and Andrew Awe, the Owls' top two LBs from 2024. Their experience and depth will be vital to stabilizing the defense this season.

Rice's secondary was the top passing defense in the AAC last season, and this strength could continue with the additions of Wisconsin rota-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Louisiana
Sept. 6	Houston
Sept. 13	Prairie View A&M
Sept. 18	@ Charlotte
Sept. 27	@ Navy
Oct. 4	Florida Atlantic
Oct. 11	@ UTSA
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	UConn
Oct. 31	Memphis
Nov. 8	UAB
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	North Texas
Nov. 29	@ South Florida

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	6/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	59/100

tional DB Max Lofy and JUCO standout Jerrick Harper. Returning starters Max Ahoia and Daveon Hook provide further stability, giving the Owls a promising group in the secondary.

OVERVIEW: After seven years without a winning record under Mike Bloomgren, Rice turned to Scott Abell to revitalize the program. Abell engineered an impressive turnaround at Davidson, guiding the Wildcats to three FCS playoff appearances and two conference titles.

His unique, run-heavy offensive scheme fits well with Rice's Texas recruiting pipelines, which should help the Owls build a strong offensive line. Defensively, continuity should be a key strength this season thanks to the decision to promote from within.

Rice football is desperate for positive momentum, and with Abell's proven ability to transform programs, the Owls could be in line for a breakthrough in year one.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (3-5)



SOUTH FLORIDA BULLS

HEAD COACH: Alex Golesh
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joel Gordon, Kodi Burns
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Orlando

RANK: 68

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Hawaii Bowl

SOUTH FLORIDA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 14th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Brent Austin,
DL Bernard Gooden. DL Immanuel
Hickman, DL Doug Blue-Eli,
DB Tawfiq Byrard

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Mudia
Reuben, WR Chas Nimrod, RB
Cartevius Norton, DL Josh
Celiscar, DL Dre Butler

OFFENSE: Alex Golesh returns to call the plays for South Florida, with Joel Gordon entering his third season as offensive coordinator. After a 2024 campaign marred by injuries, the Bulls expect a much healthier and more productive offense this year.

Quarterback Byrum Brown is back after missing most of last season due to injury. When healthy, Brown is among the best passers in the Group of Five. His backup, Bryce Archie, gained plenty of experience last year but struggled to consistently perform.

At running back, South Florida turns to former Charlotte and Iowa State ball carrier Cartevius Norton. Norton brings a reliable, steady presence to a position that lacked proven contributors last season.



Byrum Brown

Bill Wagner / Capital Gazette

Golesh reunites with transfer Tennessee wide receiver Chas Nimrod, whom he originally helped recruit out of high school. Nimrod is expected to develop strong chemistry alongside returning starter Keshawn Singleton, fueling a bounceback season for a receiving corps that struggled amid inconsistent quarterback play.

The Bulls return four starters on the offensive line, including veterans Derek Bowman and Zane Herring, both with over 20 career starts. Adding to the group is Thomas Shrader, who started 11 games for Appalachian State in 2024.

DEFENSE: Todd Orlando enters his third season as defensive coordinator, still searching for consistent results from a defense that has struggled to find its footing.

South Florida's defensive line returns productive pass rushers Rico Watson III and Bernard Gooden, who aim to build on improvements in run defense last season. The Bulls also added experienced transfers Josh Celiscar from Texas A&M and Dre Butler from Charlotte to bolster the front.

In the middle, the defense welcomes back key contributors Mac Harris and Jhalyn Shuler, both returning starters. Linebacker Rodney Hill impressed as a freshman and the coaching staff is eager to see his continued development.

South Florida's pass defense was one of the worst in college football in 2024. The secondary features plenty of upperclassmen, including starter De'Shawn Rucker. The Bulls are counting on player development and the potential im-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Boise State
Sept. 6	@ Florida
Sept. 13	@ Miami
Sept. 20	South Carolina State
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 3	Charlotte
Oct. 10	@ North Texas
Oct. 18	Florida Atlantic
Oct. 25	@ Memphis
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 6	UTSA
Nov. 15	@ Navy
Nov. 22	@ UAB
Nov. 29	Rice

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	67/100

pact of McNeese State transfer Boogsie Silvera, a top defender over the past two seasons who is expected to assume a starting role.

OVERVIEW: South Florida was predicted to take a significant step forward in 2024 but ultimately matched their win total from the previous year. While Alex Golesh has successfully transformed the offense, the defense, especially the pass defense, has remained a glaring weakness over two seasons.

A high volume of returning starters on both sides of the football could be a key to sustaining offensive success and finding themselves defensively.

Early improvement on defense will be crucial for the Bulls to find success in a challenging 2025 schedule. However, if South Florida can simply stay healthier than last season, they may finally make the breakthrough that many expected last year.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (6-2)

TEMPLE OWLS

HEAD COACH: K. C. Keeler
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tyler Walker
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Smith

RANK: 124



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

TEMPLE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2016

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 87th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 6 defensive

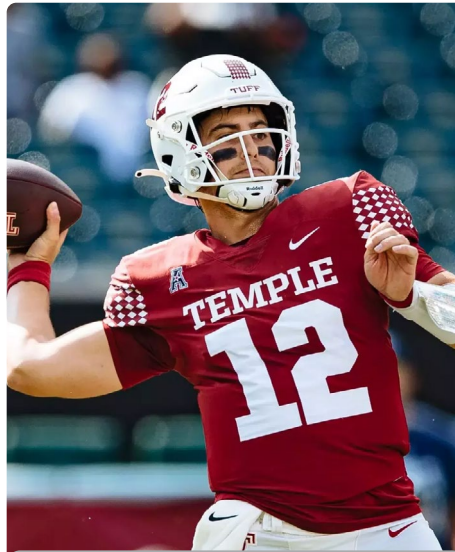
KEY LOSSES: LB Antwone Santiago, TE Landon Morris, DL Tra Thomas, OL James Faminu, OL Melvin Siani

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Jay Ducker, LB Jalen Stewart, LB Ty Davis, DL Aaron Beckwith, DB Jaylen Castleberry

OFFENSE: New offensive coordinator Tyler Walker arrives from Montana State, where he orchestrated a dynamic attack in 2024. He'll now be tasked with transforming one of the nation's least productive offenses.

Evan Simon returns for his senior season and gives the Owls a serviceable veteran presence at quarterback. Should Simon struggle, Robert Morris transfer Anthony Chiccitt—who started last season for the Colonials—could offer a different look for the offense.

Jay Ducker follows head coach K.C. Keeler from Sam Houston and brings valuable experience and production to a backfield in need of a spark. Ducker had nearly 750 rushing yards and seven touchdowns in 2024, and had a 1,000 yard season for NIU back in 2021.



Evan Simon

Temple Athletics

Simon will benefit from continuity at wide receiver with the return of John Adams and Antonio Jones, both seniors who were regular contributors last year. TE Daniel Evert, who caught a pair of touchdowns in limited action, also returns to bolster the unit.

Temple's offensive line is the biggest question mark heading into 2025. With likely multiple sophomores starting, this group will need to grow quickly. Veteran tackle Diego Barajas will anchor the unit and provide some much-needed leadership.

DEFENSE: Despite a difficult 2024 season, Temple had a few bright spots on defense that this new staff will aim to build upon. Defensive coordinator Brian Smith is coming off of a great season as the Rice defensive coordinator where he orchestrated the AAC's top secondary.

The defensive line will feature several players stepping into expanded roles. Demerick Morris and Sekou Kromah were part of the interior rotation last year and are expected to start, as are returning ends Cam'Ron Stewart and Khalil Poteat. This group will need to develop quickly to become a consistent unit.

Linebacker is an area of optimism. Ty Davis, a versatile All-Conference performer at Delaware, should make an immediate impact. He'll be joined by UMass transfer Jalen Stewart, a senior with starting experience who's likely to slide in at middle linebacker.

Temple's secondary brings back a strong veteran core with Javier Morton, Louis Frye, and Ben Osueke all returning. They'll be joined by Jaylen

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ UMass
Sept. 6	Howard
Sept. 13	Oklahoma
Sept. 20	@ Georgia Tech
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	UTSA
Oct. 11	Navy
Oct. 18	@ Charlotte
Oct. 25	@ Tulsa
Nov. 1	East Carolina
Nov. 8	@ Army
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 22	Tulane
Nov. 29	@ North Texas

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	7/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	6/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	50/100

Castleberry, a starter at Youngstown State last year, adding further experience and leadership to what could be the strength of this defense.

OVERVIEW: Hiring K.C. Keeler away from Sam Houston after a nine-win campaign was one of Temple's boldest moves in recent memory—and a welcome one for a program that hasn't posted a winning season since 2019.

Keeler made another big swing by bringing in Tyler Walker, who has just one year of coordinating experience but showed tremendous potential at Montana State.

Defensively, Temple already has several foundational pieces in place, particularly in the secondary. If the front seven can catch up, this unit could take a major step forward.

In the Group of Five, coaching upgrades can often produce instant results—and that's exactly what Temple will be hoping for in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (1-7)



TULANE GREEN WAVE

HEAD COACH: Jon Sumrall
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Craddock, Evan McKissack
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Gasparato, Tayler Polk

RANK: 25

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-5 (7-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Gasparilla Bowl

TULANE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2022

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 70th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3 offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Darian Mensah, RB Makhi Hughes, WR Mario Williams, LB Tyler Grubbs

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Kadin Semonza, DB KC Enzionmume, DL Santana Hopper, TE Justyn Reid, WR Omari Hayes, DL Mo Westmoreland

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Joe Craddock continues to engineer one of the nation's most effective ground games, building on the same success he had at Troy. With a proven system and fresh talent, Tulane is set up for another strong offensive season.

Replacing Darian Mensah at QB was a priority, and the Green Wave responded well in the portal. Ball State transfer Kadin Semonza, who earned Freshman All-MAC honors in 2024, is the early favorite to take the reins. He'll compete with Illinois transfer Donovan Leary and redshirt freshman Kellen Tasby.

Tulane will also have to replace key production at RB, but junior Arnold Barnes III returns after rushing for over 400 yards and six touchdowns as a backup last season. He'll provide a steady



Sam Howard

Tulane Athletics

presence in a backfield that needs one.

The receiving corps gets a boost with former Alabama WR Shazz Preston, who has high upside despite missing most of last year. He'll be joined by returning contributors and FAU transfer Omari Hayes, who posted a productive sophomore season.

Perhaps no unit was upgraded more than the offensive line. The Green Wave added All-Sun Belt center Jack Hollifield and All-CUSA guard John Bock in the portal, while returning Shadre Hurst and Derrick Graham to round out a seasoned and talented front.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Greg Gasparato remains at the helm of a unit that ranked near the top of the AAC in 2024. With strong returning talent and key additions, this group has the pieces to be just as formidable in 2025.

The pass rush has been supercharged with the arrivals of UTEP's Mo Westmoreland (15 sacks over the last two seasons) and Appalachian State's Santana Hopper (five sacks in 2024). Pair them with All-AAC lineman Kameron Hamilton, and Tulane's front is both deep and dangerous.

Linebacker Sam Howard anchors a younger but promising group. Redshirt sophomore Dickson Agu is a rising star after flashing in both run and pass defense last year.

The secondary remains a strength. Safeties Bailey Despanie and Jack Tchienchou return for a unit that finished second in the AAC in pass defense. At corner, Tulane brought in KC

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Northwestern
Sept. 6	@ South Alabama
Sept. 13	Duke
Sept. 20	@ Ole Miss
Sept. 27	@ Tulsa
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	East Carolina
Oct. 18	Army
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 30	@ UTSA
Nov. 7	@ Memphis
Nov. 15	Florida Atlantic
Nov. 22	@ Temple
Nov. 29	Charlotte

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	75/100

Enzionmume and Wofford's Isaiah Wadsworth, a four-year starter who brings plenty of experience to the perimeter.

OVERVIEW: Tulane's three-game skid to close the season shouldn't overshadow what Jon Sumrall accomplished in his first year. He kept the program's momentum rolling and showed why he's considered one of the best rising coaches in the country.

Even with a handful of key departures to the portal, Tulane remains one of the top contenders in the AAC. Sumrall and his staff have a proven formula and an impeccable track record—they've never missed a conference title game at any stop.

A tough non-conference slate could bring early bumps, but it might also vault the Green Wave into the national conversation. If the QB situation settles quickly and the defense excels, Tulane could be in the thick of the CFP hunt.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (7-1)

TULSA GOLDEN HURRICANE

HEAD COACH: Tre Lamb
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brad Robbins, Ty Darlington
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Reardon, Mike Gray

RANK: 128



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (1-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 14th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

TULSA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2012

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 94th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Cooper Legas, RB Anthony Watkins, WR Marquis Shoulders, OLI Jeremy Jones, LB Dorian Hopkins

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Zion Booker, TE Brody Foley, OL Simon Wilson, DL Byron Turner Jr., LB Ray Coney

OFFENSE: Tre Lamb has brought in Brad Robbins to serve as his offensive coordinator and playcaller at Tulsa. Robbins is quickly climbing the coaching ladder, making stops at Tennessee Tech in 2023 and UConn last season as the passing game coordinator.

Former walk-on Kirk Francis earned the starting QB job in 2024 and is the likely choice to lead the offense again this fall. While not flashy, Francis brings a year of starting experience that gives him an early edge in the QB room.

Tulsa leaned heavily on a committee approach in the backfield last year, and that trend should continue. Viron Ellison Jr., the team's second-leading rusher in 2024, returns and will be joined by a trio of transfer backs to provide depth and versatility.



Kirk Francis

Tulsa World

In the receiving corps, Tulsa made a splash in the portal with the additions of SEC transfers Mekhi Miller (Missouri) and Micah Tease (Texas A&M). However, the most proven newcomer is Western Carolina's Zion Booker, who posted over 500 yards last season and brings a reliable target to the offense.

The offensive line was one of Tulsa's biggest weaknesses in 2024, struggling both in the run game and in pass protection. Help arrives in the form of Middle Tennessee transfer Simon Wilson, who started 11 games at center last year. With a wave of new additions, this group has a chance to make meaningful progress.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Josh Reardon follows Lamb from East Tennessee State and has been by his side since their Gardner-Webb days. Reardon's units have played a key role in Lamb's success as a head coach.

The defensive line has been bolstered by Florida State transfer Byron Turner Jr., who appeared in every game last season and made one start. On the interior, Tai Newhouse returns to anchor a group that should have improved depth and experience.

Tulsa graduated several of its top tacklers but retains LB Chris Thompson, a steadying presence in the middle. Ray Coney joins from ETSU, bringing familiarity with the scheme and a disruptive edge—he notched five sacks in 2024 and should boost this pass rush for a team that struggled in that department in 2024.

The secondary endured a rough season in 2024 but saw a number of young players get

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Abilene Christian
Sept. 6	@ New Mexico St.
Sept. 13	Navy
Sept. 19	@ Oklahoma State
Sept. 27	Tulane
Oct. 4	@ Memphis
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 16	@ East Carolina
Oct. 25	Temple
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Florida Atlantic
Nov. 15	Oregon State
Nov. 22	@ Army
Nov. 29	UAB

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	7/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	49/100

valuable snaps. Zach Williams, Elijah Green, Dedaunte Scott, and Ashton Williams are all sophomores expected to take a leap this fall. There may still be growing pains, but this unit is trending in the right direction.

OVERVIEW: Tre Lamb earned Tulsa's attention with his turnaround at Gardner-Webb and immediate impact at East Tennessee State. Now, the Golden Hurricanes are counting on him to bring stability and long-term growth to a program that's been searching for both.

Tulsa may have its share of growing pains on both sides of the football, but it appears the defense will be much further along.

Tulsa should be more competitive in 2025 thanks to a productive offseason in the transfer portal. However, with a brutal early-season schedule, this team will need to develop chemistry and confidence in a hurry if it wants to contend for a bowl game.

RECORD PREDICTION: 2-10 (0-8)



UAB BLAZERS

HEAD COACH: Trent Dilfer
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Alex Mortensen
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Russ

RANK: 118

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UAB AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2020

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 120th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Zaire Flour-
noy, OL Jordan Hall, OL Dela-
no Townsend, DL Antavious
Woody, DB Adrian Maddox

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Kaleb
Brown, TE Antonio Ferguson,
RB Jevon Jackson, LB Eli Ennis,
DB Josh Baka, DB Jalen Cheek

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Alex Mortensen enters his second season calling plays, hoping to steady a UAB offense that regressed during a tumultuous 2024 campaign.

At QB, Jalen Kitna emerged as the starter last season and never looked back. Having him return provides valuable stability and continuity for this group.

The backfield adds a major weapon in Jevon Jackson, who ran wild for UTEP last year before transferring to UAB to return to his home state. Isaiah Jacobs is also back after an injury-shortened 2024, giving the Blazers a dependable change-of-pace option.

UAB's WR room gets a potential boost with Iowa transfer Kaleb Brown, a former Ohio State



Isaiah Jacobs

UAB Athletics

signee who will look to fulfill his upside. He'll pair with returning wideouts Iverson Hooks and Corri Milliner in what could be a sneaky-productive unit.

Up front, the offensive line will feature mostly juniors and seniors with varied starting experience. JonDarius Morgan and Adam Lepkowski are the anchors of this unit and will be leaned on heavily to lead the way in the trenches.

DEFENSE: First-year defensive coordinator Steve Russ, formerly a special assistant at Air Force, takes over a unit that was among the worst in the country last season.

The D-line underwent a full rebuild, with the staff prioritizing experience and depth. Notable new additions include Sam Houston transfer Denver Warren and Southern's Jelani Davis. UAB is hoping this group can shore up one of last season's biggest weaknesses—run defense.

The linebacker corps was another area of concern, prompting a portal push for FCS standouts. Nicholls State transfer Eli Ennis brings proven production with 53 solo tackles and three INTs in 2024, while Rhode Island's Devin Hightower brings pass-rushing ability with three sacks last season. The success of this defense may hinge on how quickly this new group settles in.

The secondary features just one returning starter in safety Sirad Bryant. In an effort to completely reset the unit, UAB added seven DBs via the portal. While some, like Tamarion Crumpley (Pitt) and Perry Fisher (Maryland), struggled for playing time at the Power Five level, they bring

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Alabama State
Sept. 6	@ Navy
Sept. 13	Akron
Sept. 20	@ Tennessee
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Army
Oct. 11	@ Florida Atlantic
Oct. 18	Memphis
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ UConn
Nov. 8	@ Rice
Nov. 15	North Texas
Nov. 22	South Florida
Nov. 29	@ Tulsa

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	6/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	54/100

upside and a fresh start to a position group in need of both.

OVERVIEW: UAB didn't earn its first FBS win until November last year and was blown out on a regular basis in 2024. The low point may have come in Week 2, when the Blazers lost to Bryant Vincent's ULM team—Vincent being the preferred successor of UAB legend Bill Clark.

This offseason, Trent Dilfer and his staff operated with the urgency of a group that knows the clock is ticking.

Offensively, they've kept their core intact while adding a few playmakers to bolster production. But on defense, wholesale changes were made, with nearly the entire starting lineup replaced by transfer additions.

Their strategy is a high-risk, high-reward gamble—but if their evaluations hold up, this roster could look dramatically improved in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (1-7)

UTSA ROADRUNNERS

HEAD COACH: Jeff Traylor
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Justin Burke
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jess Loepp

RANK: 56



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Myrtle Beach Bowl

UTSA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: American

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: 2022

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 31st

RETURNING STARTERS: 7 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Willie McCoy, DB Anthony Pinnacle III, K Tate Sandell, RB Brandon High Jr., LB Martavius French

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Cameron Blaylock, OL Trevor Timmons, DB Kaden Meier, LB Shad Banks Jr., LB Brandon Tucker

OFFENSE: Justin Burke delivered a strong bounce-back campaign in his second season as offensive coordinator, guiding UTSA back to the top of the AAC in yards per game.

Owen McCown truly came into his own in 2024, throwing for over 3,000 yards and 25 touchdowns. While reducing sacks will be a point of emphasis, McCown enters 2025 as the unquestioned leader of this offense.

The Roadrunners will once again rely on senior RB Robert Henry Jr., who returns after a 700-yard, seven-touchdown season. He'll be the featured back in a steady ground attack which also features promising sophomore Bryson Donnell, who ran for 172 yards last year.

Even with the departures of top WRs Chris



David Amador II

Marvin Pfeiffer / Express News

Carpenter and Willie McCoy, UTSA isn't short on receiving talent. Devin McCuin and David Amador II both played significant roles last year and are poised to be the primary weapons in 2025. Tight end Houston Thomas also returns after hauling in 34 passes for nearly 500 yards, offering a reliable target over the middle.

The offensive line brings back solid experience and will aim to shore up the pass protection that was shaky at times last season. Georgia State transfer Trevor Timmons, who started all 12 games in 2024, is a major addition at guard that could fix some of their pass blocking issues.

DEFENSE: UTSA's defense struggled for much of the 2024 season, but there were key positives to build upon. Defensive coordinator Jess Loepp returns and will aim to retain the strengths while addressing the glaring weaknesses.

Up front, productive veterans Jon Jones and Daemian Wimberly will again anchor a strong run defense. They're joined by Kaian Roberts-Day, a transfer from Baylor with 16 games of Power Five experience under his belt.

The linebacker corps should continue to be a strength with the return of Vic Shaw and Owen Pewee, both versatile playmakers. UTSA also added FCS All-American Brandon Tucker, who brings elite-level production that could really make a difference for the whole defense.

The biggest question mark remains the secondary, which surrendered over 260 passing yards per game—among the worst in the AAC. To address this, UTSA added Nevada transfer

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Texas A&M
Sept. 6	Texas State
Sept. 13	Incarnate Word
Sept. 20	@ Colorado State
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Temple
Oct. 11	Rice
Oct. 18	@ North Texas
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 30	Tulane
Nov. 6	@ South Florida
Nov. 15	@ Charlotte
Nov. 22	East Carolina
Nov. 28	Army

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	68/100

Kaden Meier at cornerback, and redshirt sophomore Davin Martin is expected to start after an injury-plagued 2024. At safety, experienced veteran Jemarius Lewis returns with a chance to take a step forward.

OVERVIEW: There was a time when a 7-6 season capped by a bowl win would be celebrated at UTSA—but that's no longer the standard under Jeff Traylor.

With two conference titles and multiple double-digit win seasons under his belt, Traylor has elevated the program's expectations. The offense looks primed to reload and lead the way, while the defense will need to show more consistency to match that level.

If Jess Loepp can figure out how to tighten up the pass defense, and the offense builds off of its successes from last season UTSA could be right back in the thick of the American conference title race.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-2)



CONFERENCE USA 2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. J'VILLE STATE	9-5 (7-1)
2. WESTERN KENT.	8-6 (6-2)
3. SAM HOUSTON	10-3 (6-2)
4. LIBERTY	8-4 (5-3)
5. LOUISIANA TECH	5-8 (4-4)
6. UTEP	3-9 (3-5)
7. FIU	4-8 (3-5)
8. NEW MEXICO ST.	3-9 (2-6)
9. MIDDLE TENN.	3-9 (2-6)
10. KENNESAW ST.	2-10 (2-6)

Rich Rodriguez led **Jacksonville State** to the most successful season in program history, capped by a C-USA championship. The Gamecocks thrived behind a high-powered offense that carried them throughout the year. After guiding the program through its FCS-to-FBS transition, Rodriguez departed in the offseason to return to West Virginia, leaving behind a strong foundation.

Western Kentucky featured their usual explosive offense in 2024, but a lack of consistency late in the season cost them dearly. Tyson Helton's squad secured a dramatic win over Jacksonville State to clinch a spot in the C-USA title game, only to be blown out in the championship. A bowl loss made it four defeats in the final five games, putting a damper on what was shaping up to be a strong year. Still, the Hilltoppers will have what it takes to get back to the conference title game next season.

Sam Houston took a major step forward in their second FBS season under K. C. Keeler. The Bearkats collected quality non-conference wins over Rice, Hawaii, and Texas State, while going toe-to-toe with the league's best in conference play. Their only two losses came against the eventual C-USA title game participants. Sam Houston's defense was among the best in the conference and proved to be the backbone of a breakthrough season. Unfortunately for the Bearkats, Keeler moved on from the program in the offseason, taking the head coaching job at Temple.

The Flames battled offensive issues from the outset, particularly with QB Kaidon Salter struggling to avoid sacks and turnovers. Those problems lingered all year, keeping inferior opponents in games and ultimately resulting in a shocking road upset to winless Kennesaw State in a midweek matchup. **Liberty** closed with a lopsided loss to Buffalo but still managed to win eight games—two of them in overtime—despite their struggles.

Louisiana Tech's defense kept the team in



Brylan Green

College Football Network

nearly every game, and it finally paid off late in the year. The Bulldogs began 3-6, with all but one loss coming by a single score and three in overtime. A strong finish, including two crucial wins to end conference play, earned them a bowl bid as a replacement for Marshall. That surge may have saved Sonny Cumbie's job and created real momentum heading into 2025.

The Miners' promising offseason under new head coach Scotty Walden was derailed early by an overtime loss to FCS Southern Utah in week two. That disappointment led to an 0-6 start, but **UTEP** showed flashes of offensive rhythm in the back half of the year and rallied to win three of their final six. It was a respectable debut season for Walden despite the rocky start, but the bar will be raised higher in the coming years.

FIU entered a make-or-break season under Mike MacIntyre with one of the conference's most talented rosters, featuring playmakers like WR Eric Rivers and QB Keyone Jenkins. Instead of contending for a conference title, the Panthers dropped multiple winnable games and failed to reach a bowl. MacIntyre was fired at season's end, ending a disappointing tenure where FIU routinely underperformed with talented rosters.

New Mexico State took a step back in 2024 following the retirement of Jerry Kill, who had revitalized the program. The Aggies suffered heavy portal losses and never found their footing under first-year coach Tony Sanchez. While some talent remained, they were regularly outclassed in conference play and finished just 3-9. It's clear Sanchez will need to rebuild from

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 28	JVST @ UCF
Aug. 29	KSU @ WAKE
Aug. 30	UNLV @ SHSU
Aug. 30	UTEP @ USU
Sept. 6	WKU @ TOLEDO
Sept. 6	SHSU @ HAWAII
Sept. 6	MIZZ ST @ MARSH
Sept. 6	UD @ COLO
Sept. 13	UCONN @ UD
Sept. 13	JVST @ GASO
Sept. 20	JMU @ LIB
Sept. 20	USM @ LA TECH
Sept. 20	UNR @ WKU
Sept. 20	ULM @ UTEP
Sept. 27	LIB @ ODU

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

MIKE MACINTYRE, FIU	C-
RICH RODRIGUEZ, JVST	A+
BRIAN BOHANNON, KSU	D+
JAMEY CHADWELL, LU	C-
SONNY CUMBIE, LA TECH	C+
DEREK MASON, MTSU	D
TONY SANCHEZ, NMSU	D
K. C. KEELER, SHSU	A
SCOTTY WALDEN, UTEP	C-
TYSON HELTON, WKU	B+

the ground up rather than lean on Kill's prior momentum.

Middle Tennessee also hit the reset button in 2024, hiring Derek Mason to lead a rebuilding effort. The Blue Raiders struggled mightily to run the football and gave up points in bunches on defense. Still, they managed to grab a couple of conference wins, offering a few bright spots in an otherwise difficult transition year. This marked Mason's first season as a head coach since 2020, so the growing pains were warranted.

Kennesaw State's FBS debut ended with a last-place finish in C-USA, but the Owls didn't go down quietly. They pulled off one of the season's most shocking upsets with a win over the league's top team and added another victory over FIU in late November. Despite being overmatched most weeks and losing twice in overtime, Kennesaw showed heart. That made the decision to fire longtime head coach Brian Bohannon all the more surprising.

CONFERENCE USA

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Maverick McIvor, WESTERN KENTUCKY

OPOY: Kenny Odom, UTEP

DPOY: Brylan Green, LIBERTY

COACH OF THE YEAR: Willie Simmons, FIU

1. LIBERTY The Flames are primed to return to the top of the conference standings with a star-studded returning cast on defense and a new set of contributors on offense. Many of their issues along the line of scrimmage were shored up during the offseason, which should set up new QB Ethan Vasko for success.

2. WESTERN KENTUCKY Tyson Helton's squad will have almost an entirely new look this season but remains in prime position to return to the conference title game. WKU ranks 125th in returning production and lost both offensive and defensive coordinators from last year. Still, Helton made impressive hires—most notably Abilene Christian offensive coordinator Rick Bowie, who brings QB Maverick McIvor with him. McIvor is just the type of proven quarterback who can effectively run Helton's high-flying attack.

3. LOUISIANA TECH The Bulldogs have plenty of momentum to build on from last season. Sonny Cumbie's team found its identity on offense and returns seven starters, including QB Evan Bullock. A key offseason loss was defensive coordinator Jeremiah Johnson, who led Tech to the top defense in C-USA. They filled the role with Luke Olsen, the defensive coordinator for Jacksonville State during their title run last season.

4. FIU Willie Simmons takes over the Panthers and has a real chance to bring them back to a bowl game in year one. Returning QB Keyone Jenkins and a solid group of holdovers made Simmons' job easier, allowing him to strategically fill needs through the transfer portal. Simmons also retained key coaches from the 2024 staff, including defensive coordinator Jovan Dewitt, who they hope will sustain their defensive success from last season.

5. DELAWARE The Blue Hens have a solid chance to be competitive in their FBS debut. Though not postseason-eligible, they bring back a large number of players from last year's 9-win CAA squad. Delaware's winning culture



Eli Finley

Louisiana Tech Athletics

and physical style of play should translate well to the C-USA. QB Zach Marker has the potential to be a fantastic passer this season.

6. UTEP The Miners should be much better equipped to run Scotty Walden's offense in year two, especially with key offseason additions. Walden also strengthened his staff, bringing in Bobby Daly—Montana State's former defensive coordinator—to spark growth on that side of the ball. The bar will be raised much higher for UTEP this season, as they'll have a top tier talent roster in the C-USA.

7. MISSOURI STATE The Bears are in a similar spot to the other C-USA newcomers with a strong core of returning contributors. QB Jacob Clark steps in as one of the top signal-callers in the league and could lead a potent offense. Defense, however, remains a major question after last year's struggles.

8. SAM HOUSTON The Bearcats bring back several offensive playmakers, including QB Hunter Watson, from last year's 10-win team. New head coach Phil Longo will look to keep the offense clicking, but the defense has been heavily depleted and may take a step back in 2025.

9. JACKSONVILLE STATE Charles Kelly steps into his first head coaching role but inherits a tough situation. The offseason departure of Rich Rodriguez led to major roster turnover. While Kelly's background should provide a solid defensive baseline, the offense is a major wild card heading into the year.

10. MIDDLE TENNESSEE Derek Mason enters

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 23	SHSU @ WKU
Sept. 6	LIB @ JVST
Sept. 20	UD @ FIU
Oct. 4	WKU @ UD
Oct. 8	LIB @ UTEP
Oct. 9	JVST @ SHSU
Oct. 14	FIU @ WKU
Oct. 15	SHSU @ UTEP
Oct. 21	WKU @ LA TECH
Nov. 1	JVST @ UTEP
Nov. 8	MIZZ ST @ LIB
Nov. 15	LIB @ FIU
Nov. 22	LIB @ LA TECH
Nov. 22	NMSU @ UTEP
Nov. 29	WKU @ JVST

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (71)	UTEP
2. (86)	LIBERTY
3. (92)	FLORIDA INT.
4. (98)	WESTERN KENTUCKY
5. (99)	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
6. (112)	JACKSONVILLE STATE
7. (114)	LOUISIANA TECH
8. (122)	SAM HOUSTON
9. (126)	NEW MEXICO STATE
10. (136)	MISSOURI STATE
11. (137)	DELAWARE
12. (154)	KENNESAW STATE

year two looking to build off a modest foundation. The Blue Raiders aim to become more balanced by improving the rushing offense, while Mason will look to use his defensive background to help spark improvement on that side of the ball.

11. NEW MEXICO STATE The Aggies took more hits in the offseason, losing several key players from last year's squad. The coaching staff worked the JUCO ranks to find replacements, and they're hoping those additions can inject some life into a program that's taken a step back post-Jerry Kill.

12. KENNESAW STATE New head coach Jerry Mack is taking an unconventional approach in building KSU's future, including hiring a defensive coordinator from the European League of Football. Mack is looking for creative edges to make the Owls more competitive, but 2025 figures to be a development year.



DELAWARE BLUE HENS

HEAD COACH: Ryan Carty
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Terence Archer
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Manny Rojas

RANK: 109

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-2 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

DELAWARE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2010

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 20th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Tyler Davis,
RB Marcus Yarns, WR Phil Lutz,
LB Ty Davis, QB Ryan O'Connor,
WR Sean Wilson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Brandon
Rehmann, DL Noah Matthews,
OL Noah Rosahac, DB Khalil Ali,
DB Thomas Amankwaa

OFFENSE: Terence Archer's debut season as offensive coordinator was a success, guiding the Blue Hens to 34.9 points per game in 2024. That firepower now faces a tougher test as Delaware transitions into C-USA, where the overall level of defensive play is higher.

QB Zach Marker looked fantastic in limited action last year, throwing 10 touchdowns with zero interceptions across four starts. He's expected to get the nod this season, with junior Nick Minicucci—who played meaningful snaps last year—serving as a capable backup.

The backfield will feature Jo'Nathan Silver, who averaged over six yards per carry in a backup role last year. He only received double-digit carries twice, but his workload should increase significantly in 2025.



Zach Marker

Andy Walter / Delaware State News

Delaware's passing game emphasized distribution in 2024, with six receivers logging at least 15 catches. That approach benefits returners like Max Patterson and Ja'Carree Kelly, who are expected to take on larger roles. Starting TE Caleb Fauria also returns after an All-Conference season and gives the offense a reliable target over the middle.

Up front, the Blue Hens bring back multiple starters on the offensive line, giving them both talent and experience. Veterans like Patrick Shupp and Fintan Brose anchor what should be one of the strongest O-lines in the league this season.

DEFENSE: Now in his sixth year coordinating the unit, Manny Rojas leads a defense returning most of its core from a dominant 2024 FCS campaign. With a veteran presence and proven scheme, the group is positioned well for the transition to FBS.

The defensive line will have to absorb a few key losses, but they bring back starter Keyshawn Hunter and contributors Jack Hall and James Yelbert Jr. A notable addition is Kentucky transfer Noah Matthews, who played in 12 games for the Wildcats and brings SEC-level experience.

Replacing All-CAA linebacker Ty Davis won't be easy, but the return of Gavin Moul and Dillon Trainer—who led the team in tackles last season—gives the linebacker group a solid foundation.

In the secondary, safety could be Delaware's most reliable position. Starters KT Seay, Jason Scott, and Hasson Manning all return to form a

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Delaware State
Sept. 6	@ Colorado
Sept. 13	UConn
Sept. 20	@ FIU
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 3	Western Kentucky
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 15	@ Jacksonville State
Oct. 22	Middle Tennessee
Nov. 1	@ Liberty
Nov. 8	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 15	@ Sam Houston
Nov. 22	@ Wake Forest
Nov. 29	UTEP

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	56/100

veteran trio. Cornerback, however, is a concern heading into the year, as the Blue Hens will need new playmakers to emerge to hold up in coverage.

OVERVIEW: The Blue Hens begin an exciting new chapter in 2025 with their first season at the FBS level. If recent history with other C-USA newcomers is any indication, Delaware has plenty of reason to be optimistic.

Though they won't be eligible for postseason play due to transition rules, few teams in the country bring back as much proven production as Delaware does this year, which could make the Blue Hens the latest success story in the C-USA.

The combination of a physical identity, winning culture, and roster continuity makes the Blue Hens a compelling team to watch. The competition is certainly steeper in the C-USA, but early signs suggest Delaware is up to the challenge.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (4-4)

FIU PANTHERS

HEAD COACH: Willie Simmons
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Coleman
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jovan Dewitt

RANK: 108



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

FIU AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2010

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 102nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Eric Rivers,
WR Dean Patterson, LB Travion
Barnes, LB Elijah Anderson-Tay-
lor, DB Jamal Potts

KEY ADDITIONS: TE Dallas
Payne, OL Antonio Tripp Jr., OL
Julius Pierce, DL Aaron Armit-
age, LB Johnny Chaney Jr.

OFFENSE: Willie Simmons brought in Nick Coleman as his offensive coordinator, but Simmons will handle play-calling duties in year one. Coleman, previously the QB coach at UAB, will be instrumental in developing FIU's signal callers this season.

The biggest win of the offseason was QB Keyone Jenkins withdrawing from the transfer portal after being convinced to stay by the new coaching staff. His return gives Simmons a veteran presence under center and a strong foundation to build on.

The Panthers leaned on a committee backfield in 2024, with four running backs logging at least 40 carries. Two of those return this season—Kejon Owens and Devonte Lyons—giving FIU continuity and depth in the backfield.



Keyone Jenkins

FIU Athletics

Losing top WRs Eric Rivers and Dean Patterson to Georgia Tech left a major hole in the passing game. However, young targets like Juju Lewis and Ross Fournet will get expanded roles, and Hawai'i transfer Alex Perry brings experience to the room. FIU also landed UAB transfer TE Dallas Payne, a big-bodied target who started in 2024 and could be a key difference-maker this fall.

Up front, the offensive line could exceed expectations. Returning starter Jaheim Buchanon holds down one tackle spot, while the portal provided two major additions—Julius Pierce, who started eight games at Middle Tennessee, and former four-star recruit Antonio Tripp Jr., who transfers in from Miami.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Jovan Dewitt remains on staff and will look to build on a 2024 season where FIU finished fourth in the C-USA in yards allowed per game.

While there were a few losses on the defensive line, the return of veteran tackles Jamarrion Soloman and Marquez Tatum provides a solid interior. They also reloaded through the portal, landing Stanford's Aaron Armitage and Florida State's Dante Anderson to reinforce the front.

At linebacker, junior Percy Courtney Jr. returns to lead the unit, joined by FCS All-Conference transfer Johnny Chaney Jr. With a few younger contributors emerging as rotational options, the group should be strong once again.

The secondary is young and will rely on several former backups stepping into larger roles. A key addition was the return of Demetrius Hill,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Bethune-Cookman
Sept. 6	@ Penn State
Sept. 13	Florida Atlantic
Sept. 20	Delaware
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ UConn
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 14	@ Western Kentucky
Oct. 21	Kennesaw State
Oct. 29	@ Missouri State
Nov. 8	@ Middle Tennessee
Nov. 15	Liberty
Nov. 22	Jacksonville State
Nov. 29	@ Sam Houston

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	56/100

who transferred back to FIU after limited action at Illinois. Hill was a Freshman All-American during his first stint in Miami and could be a stabilizing force on the back end.

OVERVIEW: FIU had the roster to compete for a conference title last year, but five one-score losses derailed that potential.

New head coach Willie Simmons recognized the strength of the returning core and opted against a full rebuild. He retained defensive coordinator Jovan Dewitt and emphasized player retention above all else.

While the Panthers weren't able to keep every standout, they held onto many key contributors—none more important than Jenkins at QB.

In a C-USA landscape filled with change at the top, FIU has the experience and returning production to crash the title conversation if things break right in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (5-3)



JACKSONVILLE STATE GAMECOCKS

HEAD COACH: Charles Kelly
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clint Trickett
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Williams

RANK: 130

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-5 (7-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Cure Bowl

JACKSONVILLE STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 133rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Reginald
Hughes, DB Jabari Mack, QB
Zion Turner, OL K. D. Arnold

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Cade
Cunningham, RB Cam Cook, WR
Deondre Johnson, TE Harrison
Hamsley, DL Khurtiss Perry

OFFENSE: Jacksonville State's offense will have a much different look this season with Clint Trickett taking over as offensive coordinator. Trickett, who previously held the same role at Marshall, was let go after the 2023 season for underwhelming results, but now gets a fresh start under head coach Charles Kelly.

The QB room has been completely overhauled, with Cade Cunningham and Gavin Wimsatt vying for the starting job. Cunningham has yet to log a college stat but was recruited by Trickett back in 2021. Wimsatt brings valuable experience from his time as a starter at Rutgers and most recently served as a backup at Kentucky.

At RB, junior Andrew Paul returns after scoring four touchdowns last season and should be a steady contributor. However, the Gamecocks



Michael Pettway

Jacksonville State Athletics

appear set to feature TCU transfer Cam Cook, a dynamic runner who brings a strong pedigree from the Big 12.

Two of the top three receivers from 2024 are back in Michael Pettway and Brock Rechsteiner, giving the new QB some continuity. The WR group also welcomes Rutgers transfer Deondre Johnson, who has limited experience but may benefit from his past chemistry with Wimsatt.

The offensive line is where things get concerning. After major departures up front, Jacksonville State is expected to start multiple underclassmen. They did try to bolster the unit by adding DII transfer Adrian Gumm, but the group may need time to gel.

DEFENSE: Defense is where head coach Charles Kelly and new coordinator Brian Williams—formerly of Maryland—will try to make their mark. Even with strong coaching backgrounds, they inherit a group that's been gutted by the transfer portal and graduation.

There's promise up front, where young players like Jawaun Campbell and Talan Carter return after starting most of last season as true freshmen. Veteran Darrell Prater adds experience to a defensive line that has reason for long-term optimism.

Linebacker depth is a concern, but Georgia Tech transfer Jacob Cruz brings potential after two seasons contributing on special teams. He could be in for a bigger role right away.

The secondary was hit particularly hard this offseason, but the Gamecocks did well to bring

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	@ UCF
Sept. 6	Liberty
Sept. 13	@ Georgia Southern
Sept. 20	Murray State
Sept. 27	@ Southern Miss
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	@ Sam Houston
Oct. 15	Delaware
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 29	@ Middle Tennessee
Nov. 8	@ UTEP
Nov. 15	Kennesaw State
Nov. 22	@ FIU
Nov. 29	Western Kentucky

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	6/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	48/100

in a mix of raw talent and experience. Tre'Quon Feagans, who began his career at Alabama, headlines the group, while Larry Preston and Tyrin Taylor offer starting experience from Memphis and Murray State, respectively.

OVERVIEW: Charles Kelly finally steps into a head coaching role after 35 years of college coaching, and he'll have his hands full in year one.

Jacksonville State enters 2025 as the reigning conference champion, but returns just a fraction of that title-winning roster and ranks 133rd in returning production. It's a complete reset for the program in many ways.

With a defense in transition and an offense led by a coordinator seeking redemption, there are plenty of unknowns. Still, if the Gamecocks can develop chemistry quickly and stay healthy, they could remain competitive in the C-USA—even if a repeat title run feels unlikely.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (3-5)

KENNESAW STATE OWLS

HEAD COACH: Jerry Mack
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mitch Militello
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Marc Mattioli

RANK: 135



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 2-10 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

KENNESAW STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 5th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Blake Bohannon, OL Ethan Newman, QB Davis Bryson

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Marcus Patterson, OL Rene Miller, RB Coleman Bennett, QB Dexter Williams II

OFFENSE: New offensive coordinator Mitch Militello steps into his first play-calling role after spending the past four seasons on Josh Heupel's explosive offensive staff at Tennessee. He brings fresh ideas to a Kennesaw State offense in transition.

Georgia Southern transfer Dexter Williams II projects as the starting QB. Williams began last season as the Eagles' third-stringer but showed flashes of potential in limited action before entering the portal midseason.

The Owls were aggressive in reshaping their backfield. They added Rice transfer Coleman Bennett, whose most productive years came at Bucknell, where he twice eclipsed 300 rushing yards in a season. West Georgia's Chase Belcher also joins the mix after posting 240



Gabriel Benyard

Kennesaw State Athletics

yards and three touchdowns in 2024.

The WR corps should be a strength, with Gabriel Benyard, Tykeem Wallace, and Christian Moss all returning after earning starting reps last season. Their familiarity with the offense should be a boost for whoever wins the QB job.

Up front, the offensive line could be a vulnerability. With only two starters returning, this unit will feature several new faces. One key addition is Cameron Williams, a four-year starter at Alabama A&M who brings much-needed experience.

DEFENSE: Marc Mattioli arrives as the new defensive coordinator after an unconventional path that included a stint as head coach of the Paris Musketeers in the European League of Football. He brings a winning pedigree, having also claimed an Italian league title in 2021.

Kennesaw State's defensive line is in flux heading into the season, with few proven contributors returning. Sophomore tackle Jaiden Grimes saw the field and started a few games last year, while WKU transfer Marcus Patterson adds experience at defensive end.

Linebacker is easily the strength of the defense. Donelius Johnson and Garland Benyard form a formidable duo that will anchor the front seven. Their presence should help keep the Owls respectable against the run.

The secondary returns nearly all of its production, which gives this group a chance to improve on its struggles from 2024. Isaac Paul and JeRico Washington Jr. were redshirt fresh-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	@ Wake Forest
Sept. 6	@ Indiana
Sept. 13	Merrimack
Sept. 20	Arkansas State
Sept. 27	Middle Tennessee
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	Louisiana Tech
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 21	@ FIU
Oct. 28	UTEP
Nov. 8	@ New Mexico State
Nov. 15	@ Jacksonville State
Nov. 22	Missouri State
Nov. 29	@ Liberty

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	7/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	3/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	6/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	41/100

men starters last season and should be better equipped to handle C-USA offenses this fall.

OVERVIEW: Jerry Mack returns to the head coaching ranks for the first time since 2017, when he led North Carolina Central to three conference titles in four years. After rising through the coaching ranks with stops at Tennessee and the Jacksonville Jaguars, Mack now takes on the challenge of building Kennesaw State's FBS identity.

Mack's approach has been unconventional, blending FBS and lower-level talent while assembling a staff with unique résumés. With a solid core of returning players and a few intriguing portal additions, the Owls shape up to be a true wild card in their C-USA debut.

Kennesaw State has enough returning pieces and coaching intrigue to have a legitamate shot at being more than just a bottom-tier C-USA placeholder.

RECORD PREDICTION: 2-10 (1-7)



LIBERTY FLAMES

HEAD COACH: Jamey Chadwell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Willy Korn, Newland Isaac
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Skylor Magee, Kyle Krantz

RANK: 63

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-4 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Bahamas Bowl

LIBERTY AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2023

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 15th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Kaidon Salter,
RB Quinton Cooley, WR Treon
Sibley, LB Jerome Jolly Jr., OL
Xavior Gray

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Ethan Vas-
ko, OL Christian Williams, LB
Deuce Spurlock, DB Jalon Rock,
LB Micah Pollard

OFFENSE: Willy Korn and Newland Isaac re-
turn for their third season calling plays, looking
to rebound after an inconsistent 2024 campaign
that derailed Liberty's momentum in C-USA
play.

The Flames may have found their answer at QB
in Ethan Vasko, a Coastal Carolina transfer who
impressed as a dual-threat starter last season.
With Kaidon Salter's up-and-down play in the
rearview, Vasko gives Liberty a real chance
at more consistent quarterback production in
2025.

Julian Gray steps into the starting RB role
and brings versatility as both a runner and
pass-catcher. Young backs like Vaughn Blue
and Caden Williams are poised to contribute in
complementary roles.



TJ Bush Jr.

Liberty Athletics

At wideout, Liberty returns nearly every contrib-
utor from last year's two-deep, including three
productive seniors. Depth was further bolstered
through the portal with experienced additions
Casey Cain and Jamari Person. Returning
WRs Elijah Canion and Reese Smith have the
potential to be one of the best receiving duos in
the conference.

The O-line is anchored by All-CUSA center
Aaron Fenimore, but the unit needs to retool
to match last year's output. Florida transfer
Christian Williams is a promising newcomer who
should factor into the rotation immediately.

DEFENSE: Few defenses in the conference re-
turn as much top-end talent as Liberty's, giving
co-defensive coordinators Skylor Magee and
Kyle Krantz the pieces to build a dominant unit.

The defensive line returns intact and should be
a strength. All-CUSA DE TJ Bush leads a group
that includes returning starters CJ Bazile Jr.,
Jay Hardy, and Bryce Dixon. With experience
and depth at every spot, this front four could be
among the best in the league.

At linebacker, leading tackler Joseph Carter
returns, joined by two high-upside transfers:
Deuce Spurlock (Florida) and Micah Pollard
(Michigan). This group should be active and
physical in the middle of the defense, which
should fare much better this season.

The secondary has the potential to be the
best in the C-USA. All-Conference standouts
Brylan Green and A'Khorri Jones return, and the
Flames added Weber State star Jalon Rock for
even more quality depth. Liberty's pass defense

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Maine
Sept. 6	@ Jacksonville State
Sept. 13	@ Bowling Green
Sept. 20	James Madison
Sept. 27	@ Old Dominion
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 8	@ UTEP
Oct. 14	New Mexico State
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Delaware
Nov. 8	Missouri State
Nov. 15	@ FIU
Nov. 22	@ Louisiana Tech
Nov. 29	Kennesaw State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	68/100

struggled at times last season, but that should
change with this experienced group.

OVERVIEW: Liberty's 2024 season ended the
honeymoon phase under Jamey Chadwell, as
the team faltered in conference play and barely
avoided a worse record thanks to two overtime
wins.

Even so, the Flames are well-positioned to
bounce back. They return more All-Conference
defenders than any team in the league and
have revamped the offense with a fresh face at
QB and added depth at the skill positions that
should stabilize things.

Ethan Vasko is surrounded by proven weapons
and a coaching staff that knows how to win. If
he clicks, Liberty could reestablish itself as the
C-USA's premier program this season. At their
best, the Flames are the class of the league—
and they should quickly be back to that level in
2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (7-1)

LOUISIANA TECH BULLDOGS

HEAD COACH: Sonny Cumbie
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Franklin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Luke Olsen

RANK: 102



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-8 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the Independence Bowl

LOUISIANA TECH AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2011

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 93rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: K Buck Buchanan, DL Kells Bush, DL J'Dan Burnett, WR Tru Edwards

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Devin Gandy, OL Jonathan Denis, DL Donovan Rieman, DB Noah Biglow, WR Luke Seib

OFFENSE: Louisiana Tech's offensive struggles cost them several winnable games early in 2024. Head coach Sonny Cumbie and offensive coordinator Tony Franklin now face the challenge of elevating a unit that too often stalled out last fall.

The good news is that the Bulldogs found their QB of the future in Evan Bullock. The redshirt freshman burst onto the scene with a five-TD outing against Middle Tennessee and maintained impressive efficiency throughout the year. With Bullock back under center, Louisiana Tech has a real chance to start 2025 on more stable footing.

While the Bulldogs finished near the bottom of the conference in rushing, they return their top two backs in Omiri Wiggins and Amani Givens.



Evan Bullock

Louisiana Tech Athletics

The duo split carries evenly in 2024 and should continue to shoulder the load this season.

Despite losing their top two receiving threats, there's still upside in the pass-catching group. Tight end Eli Finley remains a key piece of the aerial attack, while WRs Jay Wilkerson and Marlon Jackson bring back starting experience and familiarity within the offense.

Tech's offensive line has been a weak spot in recent years, but the 2025 unit looks stronger on paper. Veteran center Landon Nelson leads a group that includes multiple returning starters, and the addition of Central Missouri transfer Jonathan Denis—who played on a dominant line in 2024—adds a valuable boost.

DEFENSE: New defensive coordinator Luke Olsen steps into big shoes, taking over a unit that ranked 12th nationally in total defense. Olsen arrives from Jacksonville State, where he helped the Gamecocks win the C-USA in 2024.

There's less certainty up front for the Bulldogs, as the defensive line returns minimal starting experience. Kansas State transfer Donovan Rieman brings athleticism and upside, while Zion Nason, who started four games last year, adds some continuity to the group. Still, this unit remains one of the team's biggest unknowns.

Linebacker is a different story. All-CUSA standout Kolbe Fields returns to anchor a deep and experienced position group that should keep the defense steady at the second level.

In the secondary, Louisiana Tech brings back starting CB Cedric Woods and safety Jacob

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	SE Louisiana
Sept. 6	@ LSU
Sept. 13	New Mexico State
Sept. 20	Southern Miss
Sept. 27	@ UTEP
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	@ Kennesaw State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 21	Western Kentucky
Oct. 31	Sam Houston
Nov. 8	@ Delaware
Nov. 15	@ Washington State
Nov. 22	Liberty
Nov. 29	@ Missouri State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	58/100

Fields. They also landed Pitt transfer Noah Biglow to lock down the other corner spot, while Blake Thompson adds more experience to what was one of the C-USA's best units last season.

OVERVIEW: Louisiana Tech quietly put together one of the most competitive 5–7 seasons in the country last year, with three overtime losses and two more decided by a single score.

Even with the departure of their excellent defensive coordinator, the Bulldogs may have struck gold with Luke Olsen. His proven track record and the solid group of returners could allow Tech to lean on its defense once again.

Ultimately, the 2025 season hinges on the offense's development—a scenario that plays to Sonny Cumbie's strengths as a coach. With Bullock emerging at QB and a more complete supporting cast around him, Louisiana Tech has a real opportunity to break through in the C-USA.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (6-2)



MTSU BLUE RAIDERS

HEAD COACH: Derek Mason
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bodie Reeder
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Stewart

RANK: 134

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2006

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 69th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Xavier Wil-
liams, TE Holden Willis, RB Jaid-
en Credle, DB Marvae Myers

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Ikani
Tuiono, TE Tayvion Galloway, LB
Alex Mitchell, DB Jordan Chest-
nut, DB Juwon Gaston

OFFENSE: Bodie Reeder's first season as offensive coordinator produced encouraging results, with the Blue Raiders averaging over 350 yards per game and fielding one of the top passing attacks in the C-USA. However, the offense was extremely one-dimensional, lacking any consistent threat on the ground—a problem they'll need to fix in 2025 to find more balance.

Senior QB Nicholas Vattiato posted his second consecutive 3,000-yard season, but saw his efficiency dip from the year prior. With no running game to keep defenses honest, opponents were able to sit back and make life harder for the veteran signal-caller.

Much of the responsibility for improving the ground game falls to RB Jekail Middlebrook. Though he missed some time last year due



Nicholas Vattiato

Middle Tennessee State Athletics

to injury, he showed flashes of promise when healthy. Freshman DJ Taylor, a three-star recruit, could also push for playing time.

The Blue Raiders addressed a key hole at TE by adding Purdue transfer Tayvion Galloway, who should alleviate some pressure on returning WRs Cam'ron Lacy and Myles Butler. Both receivers were productive last year and will again be central to the passing attack.

Up front, the Blue Raiders underwent a significant overhaul. They leaned heavily on the portal to bring in a range of new faces, with Rhode Island transfer Jacob Otis standing out as the most proven addition. The hope is that a rebuilt line will finally give this offense a run game to complement its passing.

DEFENSE: Middle Tennessee's defense struggled mightily in 2024, finishing near the bottom of the C-USA in both yards and points allowed. Defensive-minded head coach Derek Mason has a tall task ahead in reshaping this group into a more competitive unit.

There's potential for growth along the defensive line, where three players—Anthony Bynum, Shakai Woods, and Aidan Butts—return after playing key roles as freshmen. Tackles Damon-te Smith and James Gillespie bring veteran experience to the mix, giving the group a chance to be more formidable up front.

LB Parker Hughes returns as a steady presence and will be joined by Chattanooga transfer Alex Mitchell, who brings starting experience. Developing players like Korey Smith and Amarrien Bailey add to the potential depth, but the group

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Austin Peay
Sept. 6	@ Wisconsin
Sept. 13	@ Nevada
Sept. 20	Marshall
Sept. 27	@ Kennesaw State
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 8	Missouri State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 22	@ Delaware
Oct. 29	Jacksonville State
Nov. 8	FIU
Nov. 15	@ Western Kentucky
Nov. 22	Sam Houston
Nov. 29	@ New Mexico State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	2/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	6/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	3/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	44/100

will need to grow quickly to be effective.

Veteran safety John Howse IV is a proven play-maker and provides much-needed stability on the back end. The Blue Raiders gave up over 250 passing yards per game last year, prompting them to seek help through the portal.

OVERVIEW: Derek Mason's first year in Murfreesboro was a rocky one, with the Blue Raiders stumbling to a 3-9 finish that included several lopsided losses.

The issues were painfully clear: a non-existent run game that produced just one 100-yard rusher all season, and a porous defense that surrendered 35+ points in nine separate contests.

Middle Tennessee is banking on development—particularly on defense—and a re-vamped O-line to take a step forward in the run game. But despite those efforts, another difficult season may be looming for the Blue Raiders.

RECORD PREDICTION: 2-10 (1-7)

MISSOURI STATE BEARS

HEAD COACH: Ryan Beard
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Petrino
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: L. D. Scott

RANK: 122



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-4 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: 21st (FCS)

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

MISSOURI STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2020

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 17th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Lemondre Joe,
LB Tahj Chambers, LB Michael
Teason, DB Kaleno Levine

KEY ADDITIONS: DB Christian
Ford, DB Jordan Dunbar, OL
Ebubedike Nnabugwu, DL D. J.
Wesolak, DL Davon Townley Jr.

OFFENSE: Nick Petrino, son of Arkansas offensive coordinator Bobby Petrino, returns for his sixth season calling plays for the Bears. Missouri State fielded a dynamic passing attack last year with a solid complementary run game, though both units will be tested by the jump to FBS competition.

QB Jacob Clark burst onto the scene in his first year as the starter, throwing for 26 touchdowns against just six interceptions. However, he was sacked 37 times—a number the offense must reduce to keep pace with stronger C-USA defenses. Clark will have the opportunity to emerge as one of the conference's best passers in his first season in the FBS.

The Bears will turn to a new backfield duo in Shomari Lawrence and King Davis. Lawrence



Jacob Clark

Missouri State Athletics

transfers in from FIU, while Davis is a promising three-star true freshman. Both will aim to match the output of last year's productive RB tandem.

Clark will have continuity in the passing game with the return of WRs James BlackStrain and Jmariyae Robinson. TE Lance Mason, one of the team's top weapons, also returns to give the Bears a reliable presence over the middle.

Up front, Missouri State is in decent shape with All-Conference standouts Cash Hudson and Hutson Lillibridge anchoring the O-line. A few players are recovering from offseason injuries, but the unit should be in good form by the fall and ready for C-USA play.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator L.D. Scott's unit experienced highs and lows in 2024, and the Bears will need better consistency as they prepare to face a schedule full of more explosive offenses.

Two significant additions on the defensive line—Davon Townley Jr. from Penn State and D.J. Wesolak from Oregon State—should provide the Bears with the size and strength needed to compete up front in the FBS ranks.

Linebacker remains a concern heading into 2025. Outside of returning contributor Michael Teason, no player has locked down a starting role. Depth is thin here, and it's a position group that could be tested early and often and experience some growing pains as a result.

In the secondary, safety Todric McGee is the lone returning full-time starter. JUCO transfer Navonn Barrett brings versatility to the defen-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ USC
Sept. 6	@ Marshall
Sept. 13	SMU
Sept. 20	UT Martin
Sept. 27	Western Kentucky
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 8	@ Middle Tennessee
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 22	@ New Mexico State
Oct. 29	FIU
Nov. 8	@ Liberty
Nov. 15	UTEP
Nov. 22	@ Kennesaw State
Nov. 29	Louisiana Tech

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	3/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	52/100

sive backfield, but Missouri State will need some younger players to emerge if they want to field a reliable pass defense.

OVERVIEW: After a strong bounce-back season under Ryan Beard, Missouri State enters its first FBS campaign with positive momentum and a confident coaching staff.

Like most programs making the FCS-to-FBS leap, the Bears saw a wave of transfer portal activity this offseason, helping upgrade their size and athleticism—particularly on defense.

Their loss to a three-win Ball State team last year provided a valuable reality check about the physicality and depth required at the next level.

With an improved roster and returning continuity on offense, Missouri State is better positioned than most newcomers to make an early impact in C-USA play.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)



NEW MEXICO STATE AGGIES

HEAD COACH: Tony Sanchez
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Yost
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Morris

RANK: 133

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

NEW MEXICO STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1978

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 21st

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Seth McGowan, OL Shiyazh Pete, DL Justin Beadles

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jackson Owens, OL Ma'Ky Lee, TE Gavin Harris, QB Logan Fife, DL Gabe Peterson, LB Obinna Okeke

OFFENSE: After a sudden change at offensive coordinator in 2024, New Mexico State made a splash by hiring David Yost to lead the offense. Yost, who orchestrated an impressive passing attack at FIU last season, brings a fresh identity to a group that struggled with consistency.

Quarterback Parker Awad returns after starting more than half of the Aggies' games in 2024, but struggled with efficiency and consistency. Fresno State transfer Logan Fife is the likely frontrunner to take over the starting job. Fife flashed upside in spot starts for Montana last season after serving as a long-time backup in the Mountain West.

The RB room was hit hard by departures, but New Mexico State reloaded through the portal. Former Pac-12 backs Kadarius Calloway



TJ Pride

New Mexico State Athletics

(Cal) and Dijon Stanley (Utah) bring veteran presence and upside despite limited starting experience.

Top receivers TJ Pride and PJ Johnson III return to anchor the passing attack, and JUCO standout Jackson Owens adds explosiveness. The Aggies also brought in three additional transfer WRs to bolster depth and competition in the receiver room.

Up front, the offensive line remains a concern. True freshman JR Hecklinski could be thrust into a major role early, while portal addition Ma'Ky Lee—a former North Texas starter—will be expected to contribute despite inconsistent playing time in 2024.

DEFENSE: Joe Morris and the defensive staff were aggressive in addressing needs this offseason, adding 13 transfer players across all three levels of the defense.

D-line help arrives with the return of Gabe Peterson, who rejoins the program after a year at Utah State. His familiarity with the program could help steady a largely overhauled group.

The linebacker corps will lean heavily on returning All-CUSA standout Tyler Martinez and veteran Sone Aupiu, giving the Aggies some continuity in the middle of the defense.

To fix a leaky secondary, New Mexico State added JUCO safeties DJ Hill-Smith and Bernock Iya. Hill-Smith was a two-year standout, while Iya earned All-District honors at Tyler Junior College. Returning cornerback Dakerric Hobbs is coming off a solid campaign with six

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Bryant
Sept. 6	Tulsa
Sept. 13	@ Louisiana Tech
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ New Mexico
Oct. 2	Sam Houston
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 14	@ Liberty
Oct. 22	Missouri State
Nov. 1	@ Western Kentucky
Nov. 8	Kennesaw State
Nov. 15	@ Tennessee
Nov. 22	@ UTEP
Nov. 29	Middle Tennessee

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	6/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	3/10
COACHING:	3/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	44/100

pass breakups and an interception.

OVERVIEW: Tony Sanchez inherited a difficult situation in 2024, taking over a gutted roster that was decimated by portal losses. The Aggies struggled as expected, but laid the foundation for a more competitive future.

Sanchez overhauled what wasn't working, leaning on a strong incoming recruiting class and a heavy wave of transfers for this season.

With a new OC in David Yost and a retooled skill group, the offense will try to recapture a potent ground game and find steadier play at QB. On defense, a blend of experienced returners and promising newcomers offers hope for improvement.

New Mexico State is still recovering from last year's roster purge, but the rebuild is clearly underway—and some signs of life should begin to show in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (3-5)

SAM HOUSTON BEARKATS

HEAD COACH: Phil Longo
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Zack Patterson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Freddie Aughtry-Lindsay

RANK: 126



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the New Orleans Bowl

SAM HOUSTON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 117th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4 offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Chris Murray, DB Caleb Weaver, RB DJ McK-inney, DL Quincy Wright, DB David Fisher, LB Trey Fields

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Kaleb Black, OL Zo'Maryon Bryan, RB Elijah Green, DL AJ Sargent, LB Antavious Fish

OFFENSE: Sam Houston's new coaching staff made a key internal promotion on offense, elevating RBs coach Zack Patterson to offensive coordinator under Phil Longo. His familiarity with the roster brings valuable continuity as the Bearkats try to build on last season's progress.

Quarterback Hunter Watson returns after a strong dual-threat campaign. He just missed 2,000 passing yards but made a huge impact on the ground, rushing for over 600 yards and nine touchdowns—making him the team's second-leading rusher.

The Bearkats added former Indiana RB Elijah Green, who played his most productive football in 2022 at North Carolina under Longo. That prior connection could help him flourish as the featured back in 2025.



Hunter Watson

Karen Warren / Houston Chronicle

Veteran wideouts Qua'Vez Humphreys and Michael Phoenix II return to lead the receiving corps. Arizona State transfer Kaleb Black, a former three-star recruit with speed and upside, joins the mix after limited usage with the Sun Devils.

Up front, the offensive line features returning All-CUSA guard James Dawn II and promising JUCO transfer Zo'Maryon Bryan. While some pieces need to be replaced, the Bearkats have reason to believe their run-blocking success will carry over.

DEFENSE: Former NC State assistant Freddie Aughtry-Lindsay takes over as defensive coordinator and inherits a unit that was gutted by the transfer portal. He brings a strong reputation for player development, especially in the secondary, but will be tasked with starting from scratch in many areas.

The Bearkats went to the FCS level to rebuild their defensive front, adding All-SWAC DE Keelan Cox and Tarleton State DT AJ Sargent among several new faces. This group will try to replicate last year's strong run defense despite significant turnover.

At linebacker, Akron transfer Antavious Fish—who started every game in 2024—projects as a leader on this defense. Senior CJ Johnson is one of the few holdovers, but depth and proven production are concerns at this position.

Aughtry-Lindsay has retooled the secondary with several transfers, including former NC State and Southern Illinois starter Cecil Powell, Wisconsin transfer Jace Arnold, and former

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	@ Western Kentucky
Aug. 29	UNLV
Sept. 6	@ Hawaii
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ Texas
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 2	@ New Mexico State
Oct. 9	Jacksonville State
Oct. 15	UTEP
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 31	@ Louisiana Tech
Nov. 8	@ Oregon State
Nov. 15	Delaware
Nov. 22	@ Middle Tennessee
Nov. 29	FIU

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	3/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	49/100

Texas State nickel Alonzo Edwards. It's likely the entire defensive backfield will feature new starters this fall.

OVERVIEW: Sam Houston's breakthrough 2024 season came at a cost, as the roster was hit hard by departures during the 2025 offseason. Phil Longo's retention of Zack Patterson helped stabilize the offense, but defensively, the Bearkats are essentially starting over.

The presence of Hunter Watson, key returning starters for the O-line and Longo's offensive prowess will give them a fighting chance at replicating their successes they found on offense in 2024.

The early schedule does them no favors, with four of their first five games on the road. With a new staff, a retooled roster, and an uphill battle ahead, 2025 may serve as a rebuilding year for Sam Houston as they work to reestablish a competitive identity.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (5-3)



UTEP MINERS

HEAD COACH: Scotty Walden
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Cala, Ryan Stanchek
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bobby Daly, Kelvin Sigler

RANK: 116

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UTEP AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2000

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 43rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Jevon Jackson, DL Kyran Duhon, DB Amier Boyd-Matthews, OL Otis Pitts III

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Mark Robinson, TE Cash Cheeks, DL Derek Burns, LB Jayden Wilson, DB Neil Campbell

OFFENSE: UTEP went through significant growing pains in year one under Scotty Walden's up-tempo offense. But with a strong core of returning starters and the addition of co-offensive coordinator Mark Cala, there's reason to believe the Miners will take a step forward in 2025.

Quarterback Skyler Locklear showed flashes in his first year as the starter but battled through injuries and inconsistent play. Former five-star recruit Malachi Nelson, who transferred after losing the QB battle at Boise State, could push for the job and adds a high-upside option to the room.

The Miners will look to former three-star freshman Ashten Emory to emerge as their lead RB after the departure of Jevon Jackson. Depth



Kenny Odom

UTEP Athletics

and consistency in the run game will be key to balancing the offense.

At receiver, UTEP returns a wealth of production. All-CUSA WR Kenny Odom leads a group that also brings back 2024 starters Jaden Smith and Kam Thomas. Tight end Cash Cheeks, a Northern Colorado transfer, adds another weapon to the passing game.

Up front, the Miners return three starters from last season but must replace key contributors in Isaiah Wright and All-CUSA guard Otis Pitts. The addition of All-Conference transfer Mark Robinson from Southeastern provides some optimism that this unit can remain stable.

DEFENSE: While UTEP's defense was average last year, it took a hit in the offseason when co-defensive coordinator J.J. Clark was hired away by the Dallas Cowboys. In response, the Miners brought in Bobby Daly from Montana State to help lead the unit.

The D-line remains a strength, anchored by All-CUSA tackle KD Johnson and rising sophomore Ashton Coker. JUCO pass rusher Shakaun Bowser is a notable addition and could help boost the team's sack numbers.

LB depth is a concern, but returning starter Nate Dyman and sophomore Stratton Shufelt give the Miners a foundation. Transfers—including New Mexico product Jayden Wilson—will be leaned on heavily to round out the rotation.

The secondary will look different after a lackluster 2024. Neil Campbell, a veteran with over 40 starts at Indiana Wesleyan, brings experience

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Utah State
Sept. 6	UT Martin
Sept. 13	@ Texas
Sept. 20	Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 27	Louisiana Tech
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 8	Liberty
Oct. 15	@ Sam Houston
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 28	@ Kennesaw State
Nov. 8	Jacksonville State
Nov. 15	@ Missouri State
Nov. 22	New Mexico State
Nov. 29	@ Delaware

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	55/100

and leadership to the back end. Junior safety Xavier Smith, a longtime development piece in this system, headlines a group that includes several defenders from Walden's days at Austin Peay.

OVERVIEW: Scotty Walden's debut season didn't deliver the results UTEP had hoped for, but the team showed flashes—especially in three C-USA wins down the stretch. A new scheme, injuries at QB, and a roster not yet built for Walden's gave way for inconsistency.

Still, Walden's staff moves—especially having a coordinator hired by the NFL—signal a promising eye for talent and coaching. With a more settled roster and better scheme familiarity, the Miners could be primed for a bounce back.

UTEP should look far more competitive in 2025, and if the QB position solidifies and the defense finds its footing, the Miners have the potential to break through and make a bowl appearance.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (5-3)

W. KENTUCKY HILLTOPPERS

HEAD COACH: Tyson Helton
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rick Bowie
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Da'Von Brown, Davis Merritt

RANK: 81



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-6 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Boca Raton Bowl

WESTERN KENTUCKY AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: C-USA

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2016

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 125th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Caden Velt-
kamp, WR Easton Messer, DL
Dallas Walker IV

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Matthew
Henry, QB Maverick McIvor,
RB La'Veil Wright, OL Weston
Wallace, DB Markus Knight

OFFENSE: Tyson Helton overhauled much of his offensive staff this offseason, turning to Abilene Christian offensive coordinator Rick Bowie to lead the unit. Bowie led the Wildcats to a top-20 scoring offense in 2024 and now brings that same system to Western Kentucky.

His quarterback from Abilene Christian, Maverick McIvor, follows him to Western Kentucky. McIvor was a second-team FCS All-American last season, throwing for 30 touchdowns and showcasing a strong grasp of Bowie's scheme.

In the backfield, the Hilltoppers added another FCS standout in La'Veil Wright, who averaged over five yards per carry for Austin Peay. He'll pair nicely with returning contributor George Hart III to form a capable one-two punch this season.



Maverick McIvor

WKU Athletics

Western Kentucky's wide receiver room remains a strength thanks to another impressive haul from the transfer portal. Jairus Mack and Matthew Henry bring proven production, while BYU transfer Kody Epps could be a major factor if he regains his 2022 form, when he came close to a 500-yard season.

Up front, the offensive line will feature a mix of new and returning pieces. ULM starter Devon Smith and Georgia Southern's Weston Wallace arrive via the portal, while center Melvin Collins Jr. and left tackle Marshall Jackson bring back key starting experience.

DEFENSE: After strong showings on defense in recent years, Western Kentucky promoted from within—naming Da'Von Brown and Davis Merritt co-defensive coordinators. The goal: maintain stability amid major personnel changes.

The defensive front will look completely different this fall, built almost entirely through the portal. While this adds volatility, Alabama State transfer Jakeem Fletcher brings some consistency as a multi-year starter at the FCS level.

Linebacker is another position undergoing transition. JUCO addition Kennon Loftin enters with valuable experience, while Anthony Brackenridge, a 2024 rotational player, returns to provide some continuity. Depth exists here, especially among young players poised to emerge.

In the secondary, the Hilltoppers retain key contributors in Demarko Williams and Kent Robinson. They also added Old Dominion standout Markus Knight, helping to restock a unit that

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Sam Houston
Sept. 6	North Alabama
Sept. 13	@ Toledo
Sept. 20	Nevada
Sept. 27	@ Missouri State
Oct. 3	@ Delaware
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 14	FIU
Oct. 21	@ Louisiana Tech
Nov. 1	New Mexico State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Middle Tennessee
Nov. 22	@ LSU
Nov. 29	@ Jacksonville State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	63/100

should be competitive and return to the top of the C-USA in pass defense.

OVERVIEW: Western Kentucky has been a model of consistency under Tyson Helton, notching at least eight wins in every season aside from the pandemic-shortened 2020 campaign. That track record is now being put to the test.

The Hilltoppers bring in one of the most aggressive transfer classes in the country, but relying heavily on new faces brings inherent risk. Replacing multiple key staff members—including both coordinators—only adds to the challenge.

Still, Helton has proven adept at adapting in the past, and the offensive connection between McIvor and Bowie could accelerate their transition. If the new pieces gel, Western Kentucky should remain a serious contender in the C-USA title race—though some growing pains may be unavoidable.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (7-1)



MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. OHIO	11-3 (7-1)
2. MIAMI (OH)	9-5 (7-1)
3. BUFFALO	9-4 (7-1)
4. BOWLING GREEN	7-6 (6-2)
5. W. MICHIGAN	6-7 (5-3)
6. TOLEDO	8-5 (4-4)
7. N. ILLINOIS	8-5 (4-4)
8. AKRON	4-8 (3-5)
9. E. MICHIGAN	5-7 (2-6)
10. C. MICHIGAN	4-8 (2-6)
11. BALL STATE	3-9 (2-6)
12. KENT STATE	0-12 (0-8)

Tim Albin capped a remarkable three-year run at **Ohio** with a MAC title in 2024. The Bobcats boasted the conference's best offense, led by dual-threat quarterback Parker Navarro, and a defense that came through in clutch moments. Ohio dominated the MAC Championship Game, routing the same Miami team that had defeated them earlier in the year by a convincing 38-3 score. Albin's success got him noticed by other programs, and he departed to accept the head coach position at Charlotte in the offseason.

The **Miami Redhawks**, built for conference contention, deserved credit for reaching the title game. After stumbling to a 1-4 start, Chuck Martin's squad rallied impressively, winning seven straight games heading into the championship. Although their season ended in disappointment, the Redhawks closed on a high note by capturing a victory in the Arizona Bowl over Colorado State.

Buffalo, projected as a middling team under first-year head coach Pete Lembo, emerged as the biggest surprise of the conference. The Bulls leaned on a powerful rushing attack to notch nine wins, including statement victories over Toledo and Northern Illinois. Their rise in Lembo's first season was in large part due to an underestimated talent roster.

Scot Loeffler's **Bowling Green Falcons** turned in an excellent season and came just short of the MAC title game, falling to Miami in their final regular-season contest. With a handful of dynamic offensive weapons, Bowling Green was a threat in every matchup, evidenced by narrow September losses to Texas A&M and Penn State by just one score each.

Few media outlets predicted **Western Michigan** as a sleeper in 2024, but the Broncos spent much of the first half of the season atop the conference standings. Despite a rough November stretch, they salvaged their year by defeating rival Eastern Michigan in a game



Josh Holst

NIU Athletics

that secured them a bowl bid. This was the first season in which Lance Taylor was able to produce some tangible results to get excited about going forward.

Toledo entered the season as one of the favorites but struggled with offensive inconsistency late in the year. Home losses to Bowling Green and Ohio, as well as a shocking upset by Akron, derailed their ambitions. Still, the Rockets finished strong, earning a second power-conference win of the year by defeating Pittsburgh in a bowl game.

Northern Illinois burst onto the national scene with a stunning early upset of Notre Dame. The Huskies fielded a talented squad anchored by a stout defense, but narrow losses in three MAC games cost them a chance at a truly special season.

Joe Moorhead's third year with **Akron** followed a familiar pattern after a 1-6 start that included only one win against an FCS opponent. The Zips found their stride late, winning three conference games—including a surprising upset over Toledo. This marked the first season since 2017 that Akron secured three wins in conference play.

Eastern Michigan began the year with promise, including an early win over eventual C-USA champion Jacksonville State. However, after starting 5-2, the Eagles collapsed offensively down the stretch, losing five straight and missing a bowl game for the first full season since 2017.

Jim McElwain faced a make-or-break 2024

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 28	CMU @ SJSU
Aug. 28	BUFF @ MINN
Aug. 28	WYO @ AKRON
Aug. 30	EMU @ TX ST
Aug. 30	TEM @ UMASS
Aug. 30	TOL @ UK
Sept. 6	UNT @ WMU
Sept. 6	WKU @ TOL
Sept. 6	WVU @ OHIO
Sept. 6	NIU @ MD
Sept. 13	AKRON @ UAB
Sept. 13	LIB @ BGSU
Sept. 20	UNLV @ MIAMI
Sept. 20	ULL @ EMU
Sept. 27	UCONN @ BUFF

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

JOE MOOREHEAD, AKRON	C-
MIKE NEU, BALL STATE	D-
SCOT LOEFFLER, BGSU	B+
PETE LEMBO, BUFFALO	A
JIM MCELWAIN, CMU	D+
CHRIS CREIGHTON, EMU	C-
KENNI BURNS, KENT ST.	F-
CHUCK MARTIN, MIAMI	A
THOMAS HAMMOCK, NIU	B+
TIM ALBIN, OHIO	A+
JASON CANDLE, TOLEDO	B-
LANCE TAYLOR, WMU	B

with **Central Michigan**, aiming for a bowl appearance. The Chippewas secured a notable non-conference victory over San Diego State and opened the year 3-2, but ultimately faltered. With three consecutive seasons without a bowl, Central Michigan parted ways with McElwain in the offseason.

Ball State's season foreshadowed trouble after allowing 34 points to an FCS opponent in the opener. The Cardinals struggled mightily on defense, surrendering over 40 points in five of their losses during a dismal campaign.

Finally, the 2024 **Kent State Golden Flashes** endured one of the worst seasons in program history, finishing winless. Their struggles began early with a heartbreaking 23-17 home loss to FCS Saint Francis (PA). The Flashes suffered an average margin of defeat of 17.5 points per game and remain without an FBS win since November 2022.

MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Dequan Finn, MIAMI

OPOY: Al-Jay Henderson, BUFFALO

DPOY: Eli Blakey, MIAMI

COACH OF THE YEAR: Brian Smith, OHIO

1. TOLEDO The Rockets have the staff continuity and a cast of returning stars to lead them to a MAC title this year. The connection between QB Tucker Gleason and Junior Vandeross III will be one of the best in the country, and will go a long way toward correcting some of their inefficiencies from 2024. Toledo's ability to retain talent each season is a rarity in this conference and is largely due to the continuity this coaching staff boasts.

2. MIAMI The Redhawks rank near the bottom of the entire country in returning production but were excellent at acquiring talent via the transfer portal. They'll have former MAC Player of the Year Dequan Finn leading the way with a receiving room full of weapons that could be the best in the conference.

3. BUFFALO Pete Lembo's encore season with the Bulls could be better than the original with all they bring to the table for 2025. Outstanding RB Al-Jay Henderson may be the best returning player in the Group of Five, and a QB with exciting potential in Ta'Quan Roberson adds intrigue. More importantly, Buffalo returns eight starters from a defense that wreaked havoc in 2024 and will be fully capable of doing the same this season.

4. OHIO The Bobcats are in a unique position in 2025, losing their head coach Tim Albin during the offseason but returning a good number of players and coaches from last season. These factors could help Ohio pick up right where they left off last year.

5. NORTHERN ILLINOIS No team in college football returns less production than the Huskies this season. They will also be breaking in new offensive and defensive coordinators but appear to be in a position to win on paper. They'll also draw from some young returning players who lack production but have developed in this system and should be ready for increased roles this year.

6. EASTERN MICHIGAN Chris Creighton's



Dequan Finn

Miami University Athletics

squad showed plenty of improvement on the field in 2024 and looks to carry over that trend into the new season. With both coordinators returning and a hefty group of incoming transfers boosting their roster, Eastern Michigan could be a dark horse to win the conference.

7. WESTERN MICHIGAN The Broncos will once again lean on their offense, which returns four starters and some key rotational players from 2024. A lot will ride on the shoulders of inexperienced sophomore QB Broc Lowery, but Western Michigan has an opportunity to take another step forward under Lance Taylor.

8. BOWLING GREEN A lot of questions swirl around Eddie George's first season at Bowling Green, but it is undeniable he has been a magnet for talented players. George transplanted most of his staff from Tennessee State and hopes they can replicate the success they found at the FCS level.

9. BALL STATE The Cardinals got their guy this offseason in Mike Uremovich, who reunites with his former defensive coordinator at Butler, Jeff Knowles, who arrived at Ball State a year earlier. They did a solid job assembling talented players during the offseason and are good enough to win games in this conference right away.

10. CENTRAL MICHIGAN New Chippewas head coach Matt Drinkall gained respect from his peers with an excellent past couple seasons as the O-line coach at Army. His prowess in the trenches lured in some excellent line-of-scrimage talent this offseason, and the building blocks for a good team will be in place.

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 27	BGSU @ OHIO
Sept. 27	EMU @ CMU
Oct. 4	NIU @ MIAMI
Oct. 4	BUFF @ EMU
Oct. 11	WMU @ UMASS
Oct. 11	NIU @ EMU
Oct. 18	NIU @ OHIO
Nov. 1	BUFF @ BGSU
Nov. 4	MIAMI @ OHIO
Nov. 5	NIU @ TOL
Nov. 11	OHIO @ WMU
Nov. 11	KENT @ AKRON
Nov. 12	TOL @ MIAMI
Nov. 19	MIAMI @ BUFF
Nov. 25	WMU @ EMU

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (75)	TOLEDO
2. (80)	NORTHERN ILLINOIS
3. (83)	MIAMI (OH)
4. (90)	EASTERN MICHIGAN
5. (94)	BUFFALO
6. (95)	KENT STATE
7. (96)	BOWLING GREEN
8. (105)	WESTERN MICHIGAN
9. (113)	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
10. (119)	BALL STATE
11. (121)	OHIO
12. (128)	AKRON
13. (145)	UMASS

11. UMASS The Minutemen make their return to the MAC this season under first-year head coach Joe Harasymiak. UMass got aggressive in the transfer portal once again this offseason and will look to discover where they fall in the MAC pecking order this year.

12. AKRON There were a number of promising signs for the Zips late in 2024, and they return a good amount of players who helped them find success on offense. Akron will unfortunately be ineligible for the postseason this year due to low academic scores, which could affect the team.

13. KENT STATE The Golden Flashes are on the heels of a historically awful season and fired head coach Kenni Burns during the offseason due to bizarre circumstances. Perhaps the change in coaching will help this team, but most signs point to another rough season for Kent State.



AKRON ZIPS

HEAD COACH: Joe Moorhead
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: N/A
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Tibesar

RANK: 132

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (3-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

AKRON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2005

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 91st

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Marcus Moore Jr., OL Jayvin James, DB Joey Hunter, DL CJ Nunnally IV, LB Antavious Fish

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Jordan Gant, WR Tim Grear Jr., OL Darrell Johnson Jr., DL Cyrus Durham, DB Ben Kamara

OFFENSE: Akron found a nice offensive rhythm late in 2024, scoring at least 20 points in six of their final seven games. Head coach Joe Moorhead returns as play caller for his fourth season.

Ben Finley enters his second year as the starting QB after a solid 2024 campaign, bringing valuable experience as he embarks on his sixth season of college football in 2025, bringing valuable experience to the position.

The Zips added two FCS standout running backs—former Freshman All-American Jordan Gant from Tennessee State and Colgate's Chris Gee. Both should help improve Akron's struggling rushing attack.

At wide receiver, Akron hopes to regain the production of Alex Adams, an All-MAC receiver



Ben Finley

Jeff Lange / Akron Beacon Journal

two seasons ago who missed all of 2024 due to a lower leg injury. Tight end Jake Newell returns as a reliable weapon, while Fresno State transfer Tim Grear Jr. adds youth and potential to the receiving corps.

Offensive line continuity remains a challenge, with just two starters back from last year's group. However, Akron added portal transfers Allen Jones Jr. (Toledo) and Amarie Archer (East Carolina), both of whom bring rotational experience that should help stabilize the line.

DEFENSE: Tim Tibesar returns for his fourth season as defensive coordinator. The defense struggled throughout most of 2024 but showed glimpses of promise late in the year.

The defensive line returns little starting experience, relying on rotational players like Kiawan Murphy and Dimitri Madden. A notable addition is Arizona transfer Cyrus Durham, a former highly rated JUCO defensive end who adds excitement and depth.

At linebacker, Akron brings back reserve Gage Summers but will have to rely on several inexperienced players to fill key gaps after losing some high-profile contributors at the position.

The secondary will get a boost from two high-profile transfers joining the starting lineup. Division II standout Ben Kamara started every game for Upper Iowa in 2024, and Mehki Flowers is a former four-star recruit out of Penn State. Elijah Reed, Darrian Lewis, and Justin Anderson—all of whom started multiple games last season—round out the group. The Zips could see progress in their pass defense.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Wyoming
Sept. 6	@ Nebraska
Sept. 13	@ UAB
Sept. 20	Duquesne
Sept. 27	@ Toledo
Oct. 4	Central Michigan
Oct. 11	Miami (OH)
Oct. 18	@ Ball State
Oct. 25	@ Buffalo
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 4	UMass
Nov. 11	Kent State
Nov. 18	@ Bowling Green
Nov. 29	BYE

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	47/100

OVERVIEW: The seemingly aimless Joe Moorhead era received a significant boost with Akron's late-season surge in 2024. Their 3-5 conference record was the best they have posted under Moorhead, signaling the progress the program has been seeking.

Akron has the pieces to continue building offensive momentum, including veteran QB Ben Finley and some new O-line transfers. Moorhead's play calling carries a high ceiling. Defensively, Tibesar's unit must improve, particularly with limited proven depth in the front seven. Its virtually guaranteed to be a crutch for this team, but even marginal improvement could drastically change the outcome of some games.

Unfortunately, Akron will be ineligible for postseason play this year due to low academic progress scores, which is a tough blow for a team that showed genuine promise heading into 2025. This development could have a detrimental impact in the locker room.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (2-6)

BALL STATE CARDINALS

HEAD COACH: Mike Uremovich
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: N/A
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Knowles

RANK: 127



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

BALL STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2020

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 126th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Arkel Anugwom, QB Kadin Semonza, WR Malcolm Gillie, OL Taran Tyo, RB Vaughn Pemberton

KEY ADDITIONS: LB Alfred Chea, DB Avery Stuart, RB Qua Ashley, TE Drew Cassens, WR Eric Weatherly

OFFENSE: With no official offensive coordinator in place, head coach Mike Uremovich will handle play-calling duties for Ball State in 2025. At Butler, he oversaw a run-heavy attack that averaged over 35 points per game.

Kiael Kelly, a true Swiss army knife for the Cardinals last season, appears set to take over full-time as the starting quarterback. Ball State also brought in a less experienced but highly talented transfer in Walter Taylor III from Colorado.

To bolster the running back room, the Cardinals landed All-CUSA returner Qua Ashley out of Kennesaw State. They also added sophomore Elijah Jackson, a transfer from Purdue who saw limited action last season but has three years of eligibility remaining.



Qian Magwood

Ball State Athletics

At wide receiver, Ball State brings back a pair of veterans in Qian Magwood and Ty Robinson. They'll be joined by Bucknell standout Eric Weatherly, a transfer who brings big-play potential. Perhaps the most impactful addition to the passing game is tight end Drew Cassens, who followed Uremovich from Butler and continues Ball State's tradition of strength at TE.

The O-line suffered major losses in the off-season, putting the unit in a precarious spot heading into fall. Butler transfer Adam Dolan should help stabilize the group, while players like Luke Dalton, Tristan Cook, and Cole Mosier could provide a boost if they're able to return from injuries that sidelined them for most of 2024.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Jeff Knowles enters his second season at Ball State with the goal of overhauling a unit that ranked near the bottom of the MAC statistically. During his previous stint under Uremovich at Butler, Knowles built one of the top defenses in the FCS.

There's reason for optimism up front. Starting defensive tackle Drew Hughes returns, and the addition of Bryant transfer Nathan Voorhis gives the defensive line a boost. Improved depth across the board could make this group a pleasant surprise.

Linebacker Joey Stemler is the top returning tackler and a cornerstone in the middle of the defense. Ball State was routinely gashed by the run in 2024, so it will be imperative for a few of the new transfers to step up.

In the secondary, former four-star recruit Avery Stuart headlines the incoming talent. He joins

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Purdue
Sept. 6	@ Auburn
Sept. 13	New Hampshire
Sept. 20	@ UConn
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Ohio
Oct. 11	@ Western Michigan
Oct. 18	Akron
Oct. 25	@ Northern Illinois
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 5	Kent State
Nov. 15	Eastern Michigan
Nov. 22	@ Toledo
Nov. 29	@ Miami (OH)

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	49/100

Old Dominion transfer Ashton Whitner in a revamped unit that gave up a league-worst 279 passing yards per game last season. The Cardinals will be starting several young players in the defensive backfield, which could lead to some growing pains but has significant upside.

OVERVIEW: The 2025 season marks a new chapter for Ball State, as the program moves on from a head coach who had been with the team since 2016.

New head coach Mike Uremovich arrives from Butler with a track record of success and a clear vision. He reunites with longtime defensive coordinator Jeff Knowles, who joined the program a year earlier.

The new coaching staff did a solid job reloading the roster. With the talent they've brought in and a renewed sense of direction, Ball State has the potential to be competitive in the MAC right away under this new regime.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (2-6)



BOWLING GREEN FALCONS

HEAD COACH: Eddie George
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Travis Partridge
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brandon Fisher

RANK: 123

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the 68 Ventures Bowl

BOWLING GREEN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2015

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 121st

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: TE Harold Fannin
Jr., WR Rahkeem Smith, RB
Terion Stewart, QB Connor
Bazelak

KEY ADDITIONS: TE Arlis
Boardingham, QB Drew Payne,
DB Jojo Johnson

OFFENSE: Travis Partridge follows Eddie George from Tennessee State to take over as Bowling Green's offensive coordinator. The 34-year-old rising coach enters just his second season as a coordinator after calling plays for the first time in 2024.

The QB situation remained uncertain throughout the offseason until the Falcons landed veteran transfer Drew Pyne in the spring. Pyne, who once started for Notre Dame, has taken a winding path through college football with stops at Arizona State and Missouri.

At running back, Bowling Green has a few viable options. Experienced JUCO transfer Chris McMillan, senior Justin Pegues—a 2023 transfer from Tennessee Tech—and redshirt freshman Mar'Kel Porter all will get touches.



Darius Lorfils

Al Goldis / AP

The WR corps is relatively thin following the departure of several key contributors. Finn Hogan returns with the most production from 2024, though he totaled fewer than 200 receiving yards. The Falcons are hopeful that returning rotational tight end Elijah Boyd and Florida transfer Arlis Boardingham can emerge as reliable options.

Bowling Green's offensive line returns multiple starters, including veteran center Jake Burns. The Falcons added quality depth via the portal, most notably South Florida guard Andrew Kilfoyl, who started 13 games for the Bulls.

DEFENSE: Bowling Green has consistently fielded one of the MAC's top defenses in recent years, and that standard could continue under new defensive coordinator Brandon Fisher. Fisher spent the last three seasons leading the defense at Tennessee State under Eddie George.

The headline addition from Bowling Green's 2025 portal class is former four-star DE Collins Acheampong. He'll bolster a defensive line that returns several rotational contributors, though not many full-time starters from last season.

To reload at linebacker, the Falcons tapped into the lower divisions for proven production. Ferris State transfer Sefa Saipaia arrives with two Division II national titles and 155 career tackles under his belt, while Dayton transfer Gideon Lampron was named an FCS All-American in 2024 and brings a nose for the football.

Senior DB Darius Lorfils has been a staple in Bowling Green's secondary since his freshman

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Lafayette
Sept. 6	@ Cincinnati
Sept. 13	Liberty
Sept. 20	@ Louisville
Sept. 27	@ Ohio
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Toledo
Oct. 18	Central Michigan
Oct. 25	@ Kent State
Nov. 1	Buffalo
Nov. 8	@ Eastern Michigan
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 18	Akron
Nov. 25	@ UMass

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	3/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	50/100

year and will serve as an important veteran presence in the back end. He's joined by Indiana safety transfer JoJo Johnson, who appeared in 13 games over the past two seasons and adds much needed experience.

OVERVIEW: Bowling Green made one of the boldest hires of the offseason by bringing in Eddie George to lead the program into a new era. George engineered a strong turnaround over four years at Tennessee State and arrives at Bowling Green with both of his coordinators.

The hire has already paid off in recruiting, as the Falcons brought in a mix of power conference transfers and high-level FCS standouts.

While George remains a somewhat unproven commodity at the FBS level due to his limited coaching sample size, the pairing with Bowling Green has serious upside and could produce immediate results if all the pieces come together quickly.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (4-4)

BUFFALO BULLS

HEAD COACH: Pete Lembo
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Patenaude
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Joe Bowen

RANK: 95



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (6-2)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Bahamas Bowl

BUFFALO AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2008

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 67th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Shaun Dolac, WR JJ Jenkins, WR Taji Johnson, QB CJ Ogbonna, RB Jacquez Barksdale

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Ta'Quan Roberson, LB Connor Henderson, OL Jake Timm, DB Miles Green, QB Jason Wright

OFFENSE: The Bulls rode an effective run game to a resurgent offensive season in 2024. With several key returners and a few portal additions, Buffalo has a strong chance to continue rising into the MAC's upper tier offensively in 2025.

Veteran QB Ta'Quan Roberson will lead the charge. The former three-star recruit began his career at Penn State and found success as UConn's starter two years ago. If Roberson can replicate the things he did with the Huskies, Buffalo's offense could add a key dimension that was lacking last season.

All-MAC RB Al-Jay Henderson is back after rushing for over 1,000 yards and nine TDs. He'll headline a deep RB room that includes Messiah Burch, Lamar Sperling, and promising sopho-



Al-Jay Henderson

Buffalo Athletics

more Terrance Shelton Jr. who appeared in all 13 games for the Bulls last season.

Top WR Victor Snow returns after leading the team in receptions, yards, and TDs in 2024. Rotational WRs Nick McMillan and Chance Morrow will get expanded opportunities in a retooled receiving corps. TE Evan King gained valuable experience in 2024 with appearances in 11 games, and could be an excellent asset as a big target for Roberson.

The O-line returns three players who started every game last season, along with others who played meaningful snaps. The addition of Long Island transfer Jake Timm, a former All-NEC center, further solidifies the unit.

DEFENSE: Joe Bowen's aggressive scheme paid off in a big way last season, leading the MAC in INTs, ranking third in sacks, and setting a school record with 92 tackles for loss.

A disruptive D-line returns its core group, including DTs Cornell Evans and George Wolo, along with edge rusher Kobe Stewart. That trio will be instrumental in replicating last year's success.

Replacing program legend Shaun Dolac at LB won't be easy, but the Bulls return 2024 starter Red Murdock and third-leading tackler Dion Crawford. Former All-Ivy LB Connor Henderson also joins the mix and could push for a starting role.

Pass defense was a weak spot last year, but most of the secondary returns. Seniors Jonathan Capo, Solomon Brown, Marquis Cooper,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	@ Minnesota
Sept. 6	Saint Francis
Sept. 13	@ Kent State
Sept. 20	Troy
Sept. 27	UConn
Oct. 4	Eastern Michigan
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ UMass
Oct. 25	Akron
Nov. 1	@ Bowling Green
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 12	@ Central Michigan
Nov. 19	Miami (OH)
Nov. 28	Ohio

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	59/100

and Jalen McNair bring extensive starting experience, and the unit is bolstered by a pair of new transfers which includes former DII All-American Miles Greer.

OVERVIEW: Buffalo's turnaround under Pete Lembo may have been the biggest surprise in the MAC last season. Leaning on his previous experience in the league, Lembo brought immediate success in year one.

In a conference where player retention is difficult, Buffalo managed to keep several All-MAC contributors while also landing high-profile transfers. The staff remains largely intact, with both coordinators returning to build on last year's success.

If Bowen's defense can stay disruptive and the offense remains balanced under Roberson, the Bulls will be in Detroit this December. They're built not just to match last year's performance—but to exceed it.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-2)



C. MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS

HEAD COACH: Matt Drinkall
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Chapin, Derek Fulton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sean Cronin

RANK: 129

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

CENTRAL MICHIGAN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2009

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 80th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Justin Whit-
side, WR Chris Parker, RB
Marion Lukes

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Jacob
Russell, RB Trey Cornist, DL
Dylan Fisher, DB Kalen Carroll,
DB Maddix Blackwell

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Jim Chapin arrives from Eastern Washington, where he built a reputation as a creative playcaller. His offense ranked top 10 in the FCS in scoring last season, giving Central Michigan an exciting new direction.

QB Joe Labas had an up-and-down start as the Chippewas' starter in 2024 before an injury sidelined him for the second half of the season. Despite portal additions like NAU transfer Angel Flores and JUCO product Marcus Beamon, Labas appears to be the most logical choice to reclaim the job.

Notably, Central Michigan doesn't return a single player who scored a rushing TD last season. However, they added Tulane transfer Trey Cornist, who saw action in six games as a

120



Tyson Davis

Central Michigan Athletics

redshirt freshman and should have a chance to emerge.

The WR corps was plagued by injuries in 2024, but Tyson Davis returns after missing the entire year and provides a needed boost. Veterans Jordyn Williams and Stephan Bracey Jr. are back as well, though there isn't much proven production outside of Davis. Finding a true No. 2 option early will be a priority.

The O-line returns several experienced contributors from a group that ranked in the MAC's top half for rushing yards. Transfer additions include Columbia's John Iannuzzi, who started 20 straight games, and Jacob Russell from Valparaiso, who started 11 games as a redshirt freshman.

DEFENSE: Longtime assistant Sean Cronin brings over two decades of coaching experience, most recently as the D-line coach at Army. His familiarity with new head coach Matt Drinkall should help ease the transition on that side of the ball.

The D-line features multiple returning contributors and adds Division II standout DT Dylan Fisher. Redshirt junior DE Kade Kostus, who started all 12 games last season, provides a steady anchor as the unit continues to develop.

The LB corps is one of the most experienced in the conference, led by All-MAC standout Jordan Kwiatkowski alongside reliable veterans Dakota Cochran and Fernando Sanchez III.

The secondary might be the Chippewas' best position group. Starting safeties Caleb Spann

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	@ San Jose State
Sept. 6	@ Pittsburgh
Sept. 13	@ Michigan
Sept. 20	Wagner
Sept. 27	Eastern Michigan
Oct. 4	@ Akron
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ Bowling Green
Oct. 25	UMass
Nov. 1	@ Western Michigan
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 12	Buffalo
Nov. 19	@ Kent State
Nov. 29	@ Toledo

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	7/15
RUNNINGBACK:	3/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	1/5
OVERALL:	49/100

and Elijah Rikard helped CMU finish top three in the MAC in pass defense. They're joined by sophomore breakout CB Jaion Jackson and two key transfers: former Cincinnati starter Kalen Carroll and All-conference DB Maddix Blackwell.

OVERVIEW: Matt Drinkall takes over after building one of the nation's best O-lines at Army and previously leading NAIA powerhouse Kansas Wesleyan. His combined experience gives Central Michigan a steady hand at the top.

Drinkall's reputation in the trenches helped attract quality portal additions up front, though the Chippewas still have work to do at the skill positions on offense.

CMU's offseason was more productive than many expected, especially on defense. If Labas stays healthy and the WR room finds consistency, the Chippewas have a real shot to return to a bowl game in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (3-5)

E. MICHIGAN EAGLES

HEAD COACH: Chris Creighton
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Piatkowski
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ben Needham

RANK: 119



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (2-6)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

EASTERN MICHIGAN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1987

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 95th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Cole Snyder,
RB Delbert Mimms III, LB
James Djonkam, LB Luke Mur-
phy, WR Oran Singleton

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Noah Kim,
TE Tanner Lemaster, LB Kadin
Bailey, WR Petey Tucker

OFFENSE: Eastern Michigan finished third in the MAC in yards per game last season—a dramatic improvement from 2023, when they ranked last in the conference. Offensive coordinator Mike Piatkowski enters his third year with the program and is aiming for his most complete unit yet.

The Eagles added a high-profile QB transfer in Noah Kim, who began his career at Michigan State and most recently played at Coastal Carolina. While Kim has yet to lock down a long-term starting job, he brings a strong arm and intriguing upside to this offense.

RB Dontae McMillan returns in hopes of becoming the feature back. Eastern Michigan also hit the portal for reinforcements, landing Liberty transfer James Jointer Jr. and former Michigan



Terry Lockett Jr.

Eastern Michigan Athletics

RB Tavierre Dunlap—both talented prospects who could challenge for starting reps.

WR Terry Lockett Jr. led the team in receiving yards and TDs on his way to earning All-MAC honors in 2024. He'll be joined by Georgia State transfer Petey Tucker, who posted over 300 yards last season, and former Kentucky TE Tanner Lemaster, a highly rated recruit with pass-catching potential.

The O-line brings back several key contributors, including veteran guard Mickey Rewolinski. Transfer addition Spencer Webb, a young lineman with starting experience at NC A&T, could add value up front and continue Eastern Michigan's tradition of excellent play up front.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Ben Needham's unit made strides in 2024, though lapses in conference play ultimately cost the team in key moments.

The D-line, rebuilt with transfers last season, proved to be one of the team's strengths—and now those players return for another year. Donovan Green, Tyrell Martin, and Jefferson Adam were all productive and form the core of this experienced front.

Replacing All-MAC LB James Djonkam won't be easy, but the Eagles added Syracuse transfer Kadin Bailey, a former rotational piece with upside. Zach Mowchan also returns after making several starts last year.

The secondary brings back multiple familiar faces, including Barry Manning and Dramarian McNulty. One of the more intriguing additions is

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Texas State
Sept. 6	Long Island
Sept. 13	@ Kentucky
Sept. 20	Louisiana
Sept. 27	@ Central Michigan
Oct. 4	@ Buffalo
Oct. 11	Northern Illinois
Oct. 18	@ Miami (OH)
Oct. 25	Ohio
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Bowling Green
Nov. 15	@ Ball State
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 25	Western Michigan

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	53/100

safety Davion Williams, who posted 12.5 TFLs last season at Charleston Southern and brings a physical edge to the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: Despite clear improvement on both sides of the ball, Eastern Michigan fell short of a bowl due to a brutal late-season schedule and three one-score losses. It marked the first full season since 2017 that a Chris Creighton-led team missed the postseason.

Still, optimism surrounds the program heading into 2025. Both coordinators return after showing promising development, and the roster boasts a good mix of returning starters and high-upside transfers.

A tough non-conference slate—including an SEC opponent and two Group of Five contenders—will test this group early, but Creighton has proven his ability to navigate adversity. The Eagles have a strong shot to bounce back and return to bowl contention this fall..

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (5-3)



KENT STATE GOLDEN FLASHES

HEAD COACH: Mark Carney
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Clay Patterson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kody Morgan

RANK: 136

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 0-12 (0-8)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

KENT STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1972

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 110th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Joel Baka,
WR Chrishon McCray, RB Ky
Thomas, RB Curtis Douglas, QB
Tommy Ulatowski

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Da'Rea-
lyst Clark, OL Jeff Burton, RB
Jordan Nubin, DL Thomas Aden,
DB Semaj Cross

OFFENSE: Mark Carney will retain his OC title despite being elevated to interim head coach. There's still plenty of work to do to overhaul an offense that finished dead last nationally in 2024.

QB Devin Kargman is the likely starter after spending the past two seasons in the program and making a few starts. Redshirt freshman Ruel Tomlinson is another option but lacks the experience of Kargman.

With a pair of key RBs gone, Kent State brought in Minnesota transfer Jordan Nubin to help fill the void. Redshirt freshman Ayden Harris, who saw limited action last season, also returns. The Flashes could make something happen with their RBs this year, which appears to be the most promising department on offense.



Devin Kargman

Kent State Athletics

The WR room is thin and largely unproven. Jay Jay Etheridge and Deshaun Martin each topped 100 receiving yards in 2024, but struggled to find rhythm in an offense that rarely moved the ball. Incoming transfer Da'Realyst Clark shined in the JUCO ranks last season and may be the target that has the most upside out of this group.

Up front, Dustyn Morrell is the lone returning O-lineman to start more than half the games last season. Kent State added several transfers in hopes of improving a unit that allowed 43 sacks.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Kody Morgan returns to a group that allowed over 500 yards per game last year—a unit in need of a major reset.

The D-line features returning contributors Antoine Campbell Jr. and Mattheus Carroll, though neither had consistent starting roles. Pitt transfer DT Thomas Aden joins the rotation, hoping for a fresh start with the Golden Flashes this season.

There's at least some experience at LB with returning starters Mason Woods and Canaan Williams. Lafayette transfer Semaj Cross, who made 40 tackles in 2024, could provide depth at the STAR position.

If there were any signs of life for this defense last year, they came from this secondary. A quartet of sophomores are projected to start for Kent State, several returning to their 2024 starting roles. Tevin Tucker and CJ Young look to build off of promising starts to their career.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Merrimack
Sept. 6	@ Texas Tech
Sept. 13	Buffalo
Sept. 20	@ Florida State
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Oklahoma
Oct. 11	UMass
Oct. 18	@ Toledo
Oct. 25	Bowling Green
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 5	@ Ball State
Nov. 11	@ Akron
Nov. 19	Central Michigan
Nov. 28	@ Northern Illinois

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	5/15
RUNNINGBACK:	3/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	5/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	6/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	2/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	35/100

OVERVIEW: Kent State entered the offseason already facing major uncertainty after a winless 2024. That instability only deepened after head coach Kenni Burns was fired for cause in April.

What followed was the lowest point yet for a program just three years removed from a MAC title game appearance. Carney now takes the reins on an interim basis, and may be auditioning for the permanent role.

A change in pace could actually be what this program needed this year, and there could be some improvement made with Carney at the helm. Unfortunately for Kent State, there wasn't enough wholesale change to completely shift the culture at the program, which is in a tough spot.

There are signs of potential progress with new leadership and some roster turnover. Given that the Golden Flashes are 1-23 over the past two seasons, there's nowhere to go but up in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 1-11 (0-8)

UMASS MINUTEMEN

HEAD COACH: Joe Harasymiak
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bajakian
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jared Keyte

RANK: 131



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 2-10

CONFERENCE RANK: N/A

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UMASS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 122nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Jakobie Kee-
ney-James, DB Arsheen Jiles,
TE Dominick Mazotti, DB Te'Rai
Powell, RB Jalen John

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Grant
Jordan, OL Mike Entwistle, RB
Rocko Griffin, DL Joshua No-
bles, LB Timmy Hinspeter, DB
Malcolm Greene, DB DD Snyder

OFFENSE: UMass' offense will be in capa-
ble hands under new OC Mike Bajakian, who
brings coordinator experience from Boston Col-
lege, Northwestern, Tennessee, and Cincinnati.

The Minutemen added an intriguing new QB in
Grant Jordan, who threw 22 TDs and earned
All-Ivy League honorable mention at Yale in
2024. He should take over the starting job right
away.

RB Rocko Griffin arrives from UTSA, where he
rushed for 500 yards over the past two seasons.
He'll likely be the feature back in a backfield
that needed reinforcements.

UMass returns three of its top WRs, including
T.Y. Harding, who caught five TDs last year.
South Florida transfer Tyree Kelly joins the



T. Y. Harding

Eric Canha / Imagn Images

group and brings upside. Former Kentucky TE
Tanner Lemaster is another name to watch.

The O-line brings back starters Ryan Mosesso
and Benjamin Roy Jr., while West Virginia trans-
fer Sullivan Weidman adds depth after earning
limited reps last season. This will be a key
position group to watch, as their development
will directly impact the progress of the offense
as a whole.

DEFENSE: There's plenty of excitement
surrounding the arrival of new head coach Joe
Harasymiak, who built his reputation as a sharp
defensive mind. He brought over Jared Keyte
from Rutgers—where he coached the nickels
position—to serve as his defensive coordinator.

UMass' D-line was a work-in-progress last
season, but there's hope for internal growth and
better production under the new staff. David
Onuoha struggled to get on the field at Rutgers
but has potential and familiarity with the system.
Returning linemen Tim Grant-Randall and
Shambre Jackson played rotational roles last
season and will compete for larger responsibil-
ities in 2025.

The LB corps brings back some experienced
pieces, including Derrieon Craig and Jalen
Harrell. Rutgers transfer Timmy Hinspeter adds
an intriguing dimension—he was once a 0-star
recruit, but brings Big Ten experience that
could prove valuable in a leadership role.

In the secondary, UMass returns a few import-
ant contributors like safety Jeremiah McGill and
cornerback Ryan Barnes. Transfer DB DD Sny-
der joins the room after two productive seasons

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Temple
Sept. 6	Bryant
Sept. 13	@ Iowa
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	@ Missouri
Oct. 4	Western Michigan
Oct. 11	@ Kent State
Oct. 18	Buffalo
Oct. 25	@ Central Michigan
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 4	@ Akron
Nov. 12	Northern Illinois
Nov. 18	@ Ohio
Nov. 25	Bowling Green

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	48/100

at Ball State, and could make an immediate
impact alongside the returning starters.

OVERVIEW: UMass makes its return to the
MAC this season, and will usher in the Joe
Harasymiak era in the same year.

There have been a lot of positive signs for the
Minutement this offseason, which includes a
good number of players who opted to stick
around despite the change in head coach.

This staff opted to get aggressive in the transfer
portal, and will rely upon transfers in many key
positions to perform this season.

UMass had zero FBS wins last season, but
played three power conference opponents, and
will have a much easier schedule in the MAC.

2025 will be a fight for the Minutemen to estab-
lish where they fall in the pecking order of this
conference.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (2-6)



MIAMI (OH) REDHAWKS

HEAD COACH: Chuck Martin
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pat Welsh
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Brechin

RANK: 84

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-5 (7-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Arizona Bowl

MIAMI (OH) AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2023

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 128th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3 offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Brett Gabbert, RB Keyon Mozee, WR Javon Tracy, WR Reggie Virgil, LB Matt Salopek

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Deion Colzie, OL Austin Uke, QB Dequan Finn, DL Kam Wilson, DB Koy Beasley

OFFENSE: Despite being projected as one of the MAC's top offenses, Miami struggled to meet expectations and saw its shortcomings exposed in the conference title loss to Ohio. Third-year OC Pat Welsh will be tasked with getting the Redhawks back on track in 2025.

The departure of longtime starter Brett Gabbert is softened by the arrival of Baylor transfer Dequan Finn. A two-time All-MAC honoree at Toledo, Finn is a proven QB in this league and brings both experience and explosiveness to the offense.

RB Kenny Tracy returns for his senior season after missing all of 2024 with an injury, and he'll be joined by Jordan Brunson, who ran for 299 yards and four TDs in a rotational role last season.



Corban Hondru

Miami Redhawks Athletics

Miami brought in a strong group of transfer WRs to bolster the offense. Headlining the class is Notre Dame transfer Deion Colzie, who spent four seasons with the Irish. Florida State's Darion Williamson and Washington's Keith Reynolds also arrive with Power Four pedigree and immediate impact potential.

The offensive line faces some turnover and will need to retool quickly. While players like Greg Smith Jr. will step into larger roles, the addition of Power Five transfers like Stanford's Austin Uke—along with the program's strong track record of O-line development—provides a solid foundation.

DEFENSE: The Redhawks fielded one of the best defenses in the MAC last season and consistently held their own against Power Conference opponents. With several key returners, Miami is poised for another dominant year on this side of the ball.

EDGE Adam Trick leads a group of returning rotational players up front. Trick notched four sacks in just three starts last season and will be counted on for a larger role. Cincinnati transfer Kam Wilson also joins the defensive line rotation and could provide immediate help.

At LB, Miami returns veteran Corban Hondru to anchor the unit. The Redhawks consistently produce high-level LB play, and the blend of experience and young talent this year should maintain that tradition.

Miami's secondary was elite in 2024, and the return of All-MAC DB Eli Blakey solidifies the back end. Blakey pairs with fellow returning

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	@ Wisconsin
Sept. 6	@ Rutgers
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	UNLV
Sept. 27	Lindenwood
Oct. 4	@ Northern Illinois
Oct. 11	@ Akron
Oct. 18	Eastern Michigan
Oct. 25	Western Michigan
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 4	@ Ohio
Nov. 12	Toledo
Nov. 19	@ Buffalo
Nov. 29	Ball State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	5/5
OVERALL:	62/100

starter Silas Walters to form one of the top safety duos in the Group of Five. Young players like transfer Koy Beasley from Purdue are also set to make an instant impact.

OVERVIEW: Chuck Martin has built a consistent winner in Oxford, leading Miami to back-to-back MAC title game appearances for the first time since 2005.

Though the Redhawks return one of the lowest percentages of production in the country, they were aggressive in reloading through the portal, particularly at QB and WR. The biggest concern lies at the line of scrimmage, where several positions remain unsettled heading into the fall.

Miami will once again be tested early with a difficult non-conference slate, but that's become standard under Martin. Regardless of how those early games go, the Redhawks will be a serious contender in the MAC once league play begins.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (6-2)

N. ILLINOIS HUSKIES

HEAD COACH: Thomas Hammock
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Quinn Sanders
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rob Harley

RANK: 106



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Idaho Potato Bowl

NORTHERN ILLINOIS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 136th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Ethan Hampton, DB Ethan Tierney, DB Amariyun Knighten, DL Raishein Thomas, WR Cam Thompson

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Aidan Tweedy, WR Gary Givens, DL Dasean Dixon, LB Danny Cronin

OFFENSE: Northern Illinois brings in a new offensive coordinator in Quinn Sanders, who spent the last three seasons as head coach at Division II Charleston, where he compiled an impressive 27–8 record.

The departure of QB Ethan Hampton created an opening under center, but redshirt sophomore Josh Holst showed promise in limited action, including a start in the Idaho Potato Bowl. Based on his performance, Holst appears poised to take over as the full-time starter.

The Huskies get a boost in the backfield with the return of Jaylen Poe, who missed last season due to injury. He'll be joined by sophomore Telly Johnson Jr., who rushed for nearly 500 yards in 2024 and will be a major breakout candidate for this offense.



Telly Johnson Jr.

NIU Athletics

At WR, Northern Illinois must replace several top targets, but returnees Dane Pardridge and redshirt freshman La'Don Bryant offer potential. Valparaíso transfer Gary Givens, who impressed as a freshman in 2024, brings needed upside, while returning TE Grayson Barnes provides a reliable option after a 300-yard season.

Up front, transfer center Aidan Tweedy—who started 22 games at Wayne State—joins a strong O-line tradition in DeKalb. Sophomores Jacob Welch and Thomas Paasch are expected to step into starting roles as the Huskies look to continue their development-heavy approach in the trenches.

DEFENSE: Rob Harley steps in as defensive coordinator, inheriting a unit that led the MAC in both total defense and pass defense last season. Harley spent the past four years running the defense at Arkansas State and now takes over one of the conference's most consistent groups.

The Huskies will lean on a veteran EDGE duo in Jalonnice and Roy Williams, both of whom bring experience and production. However, the interior D-line faces a reset after some key departures. Transfers like Albany's Dasean Dixon will be counted on to step in.

There's plenty of senior leadership at LB, with Quinn Urwiler likely to earn a starting role. The depth at this position gives NIU flexibility, though the final rotation remains unsettled heading into fall camp.

The secondary lost its top three safeties and will need to rebuild quickly. Jacob Finley returns af-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Holy Cross
Sept. 5	@ Maryland
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ Mississippi State
Sept. 27	San Diego State
Oct. 4	Miami (OH)
Oct. 11	@ Eastern Michigan
Oct. 18	@ Ohio
Oct. 25	Ball State
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 5	@ Toledo
Nov. 12	@ UMass
Nov. 18	Western Michigan
Nov. 28	Kent State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	56/100

ter starting the final five games of 2024, and the staff added Division II standout Jasper Beeler to help reinforce the back end.

OVERVIEW: Northern Illinois posted a solid 2024 campaign that could've been even better if not for a handful of close losses. Still, the program has now logged back-to-back seasons of improvement and has positive momentum heading into 2025.

Head coach Thomas Hammock had to reshuffle his coordinator staff once again—some moves by choice, others due to departures—but his experience managing turnover and maintaining a clear program identity has served the Huskies well.

With this marking their final season in the MAC due to realignment, Northern Illinois has the pieces in place to make a serious run at the conference title—if they can get a few timely breaks.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (5-3)



OHIO BOBCATS

HEAD COACH: Brian Smith
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scott Isphording
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Hauser

RANK: 105

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-3 (7-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Cure Bowl

OHIO AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 54th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Bradley Weaver, DL Cam Rice, RB Anthony Tyus III, WR Coleman Owen, OL Parker Titsworth

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Sieh Bangura, OL Josh Waite, DL Anas Luqman, DL Nehemiah Dukes, DL Evan Herrmann

OFFENSE: Ohio led the MAC with 406 yards per game in 2024 and returns several key pieces of its offensive staff, including longtime coordinator Scott Isphording. Continuity and proven talent make the Bobcats a serious offensive threat once again.

Second-team All-MAC QB Parker Navarro is back for his fifth and likely final college season. Navarro rushed for over 1,000 yards and accounted for 31 total touchdowns in his first year as a starter, making him one of the most dynamic dual-threat QBs in the Group of Five.

The Bobcats welcome back a familiar face in RB Sieh Bangura, who returns to Ohio after a year at Minnesota. Bangura led the Bobcats in rushing in both 2022 and 2023 and brings experience and reliability to the backfield.



Parker Navarro

Ohio Athletics

At wide receiver, Ohio returns a veteran trio in Chase Haendricks, Rodney Harris II, and Caleb Gossett—each of whom logged significant snaps last season. They'll be joined again by starting TE Mason Williams as the Bobcats bring back nearly all of their receiving production outside of All-Conference WR Coleman Owen.

Up front, Ohio boasted one of the top O-lines in the Group of Five last season. While some top-end talent has moved on, multiple starters and rotational pieces return, giving this unit the depth to remain one of the MAC's best.

DEFENSE: A major win this offseason came when defensive coordinator John Hauser opted to stay on staff despite head coach Tim Albin's departure. Hauser has led one of the MAC's top defenses and will look to keep that standard alive in 2025.

The biggest question mark lies on the D-line, where Ohio must replace all four starters from last year. FCS transfers Nehemiah Dukes and Anas Luqman bring starting experience, but the lack of proven depth up front could lead to early growing pains.

At linebacker, the Bobcats lack returning experience among top tacklers. Michael Molnar and Jack Fries were part of the rotation in 2024 and will be counted on to step up. Freshman in-state prospect Charlie Christopher could play a significant role right away.

The secondary is the clear strength of this defense. All-Conference safety DJ Walker returns, along with most of the 2024 starting unit.

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	@ Rutgers
Sept. 6	West Virginia
Sept. 13	@ Ohio State
Sept. 20	Gardner-Webb
Sept. 27	Bowling Green
Oct. 4	@ Ball State
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	Northern Illinois
Oct. 25	@ Eastern Michigan
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 4	Miami (OH)
Nov. 11	@ Western Michigan
Nov. 18	UMass
Nov. 28	@ Buffalo

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	56/100

They'll be reinforced by South Alabama transfer Rickey Hyatt Jr., who started four games for the Jaguars last fall.

OVERVIEW: Tim Albin leaves behind a legendary legacy at Ohio, with three straight 10-win seasons and a MAC championship capping one of the program's most successful eras. The Bobcats now turn to another internal hire in new head coach Brian Smith.

Though Smith has no head coaching experience, his ability to keep most of the staff intact has positioned Ohio for a seamless transition. With a loaded offense and a trustworthy secondary, the Bobcats have the foundation to contend immediately.

If Ohio's front seven can come together quickly on defense, the Bobcats will once again be in the heart of the MAC title race and have an opportunity to make a serious push for back to back conference championships.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (7-1)

TOLEDO ROCKETS

HEAD COACH: Jason Candle
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Hallett, Robert Weiner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Vince Kehres, Ross Watson

RANK: 67



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (4-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Sports Bowl

TOLEDO AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2022

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 48th

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Connor Walendzak, WR Jerjuan Newton, DB Maxen Hook, DL Darius Alexander

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Trayvon Rudolph, OL Terrence Moore, RB Chip Trayanum, DL Louce Julien, LB Langston Long

OFFENSE: Toledo brings back a pair of sixth-year offensive coordinators in Mike Hallett and Robert Weiner, who have become synonymous with high-powered offenses. The duo helped produce the MAC's top passing attack in 2024 and will aim to build on that success this fall.

Tucker Gleason thrived in his first year as the full-time starter, racking up over 3,000 total yards and 31 touchdowns. While Gleason is firmly entrenched as QB1, redshirt freshman John Alan Richter flashed intriguing potential during a pair of late-season starts.

The Rockets retooled their backfield via the transfer portal, adding NC A&T starter Kenji Christian and Ohio State transfer Chip Trayanum—both of whom should push for early reps in this running game.



Junior Vandeross III

Toledo Athletics

At receiver, Junior Vandeross III returns as the focal point of the passing game after finishing just 43 yards shy of 1,000 in 2024. He's joined by Northern Illinois transfer Trayvon Rudolph, who brings over 2,000 career receiving yards to an already solid group of pass catchers.

Three offensive linemen who started every game last year return, including All-MAC selection Ethan Spoth. Toledo also bolstered the unit with transfer additions Jonathan Harder (Cincinnati) and Terrence Moore (Pitt), both of whom bring starting experience.

DEFENSE: Stability defines this defensive staff, with co-coordinators Vince Kehres and Ross Watson both entering their sixth season. That level of continuity has helped Toledo maintain a consistently tough, disciplined defense.

The D-line features several players with rotational experience, though few full-time starters return. Seniors Martez Poynter and ESean Carter will anchor the interior, while UMass transfer Louce Julien is expected to make an immediate impact on the edge.

At linebacker, the Rockets will need to replace an All-Conference performer and have limited returning experience. South Florida transfer Langston Long played in eight games last season and is expected to take on a significant role.

Toledo's secondary might be the best in the MAC. All-MAC defensive back Avery Smith returns alongside fellow 2024 starters, including Braden Awls, who led the team with four interceptions. With that experience and playmaking

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Kentucky
Sept. 6	Western Kentucky
Sept. 13	Morgan State
Sept. 20	@ Western Michigan
Sept. 27	Akron
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Bowling Green
Oct. 18	Kent State
Oct. 25	@ Washington State
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 5	Northern Illinois
Nov. 12	@ Miami (OH)
Nov. 22	Ball State
Nov. 29	@ Central Michigan

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	68/100

ability, this unit will be the foundation of the defense.

OVERVIEW: No team in the MAC exemplifies loyalty and continuity quite like Toledo. Head coach Jason Candle, now entering his 10th season at the helm, has been with the program since 2009. Every coordinator has been on staff for at least five years, giving the Rockets an almost unmatched level of stability.

That consistency has helped Toledo retain great talent like Junior Vandeross III, Tucker Gleason, and Avery Smith, even in an era where player movement is common.

With such deep-rooted development and a reliable system on both sides of the ball, Toledo enters 2025 with a high floor and legitimate championship aspirations. If they can clean up the details that held them back in 2024, the Rockets will once again be right in the middle of the MAC title hunt.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (7-1)



W. MICHIGAN BRONCOS

HEAD COACH: Lance Taylor
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Walt Bell
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scott Power

RANK: 121

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (5-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Salute to Veterans Bowl

WESTERN MICHIGAN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: MAC

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2016

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 123rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Hayden Wolff,
RB Jaden Nixon, WR Kenneth
Wommack, OL Jacob Gideon

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Raheem
Anderson II, WR Christian
Leary, LB James Camden, DB
Jarvarius Sims

OFFENSE: Western Michigan's offensive surge propelled the Broncos to a 4-0 start in MAC play last fall. Now, second-year offensive coordinator Walt Bell will look to recapture that spark after the unit faltered down the stretch.

The spotlight shifts to sophomore QB Broc Lowry, an Indiana transfer and former three-star prospect. While he doesn't yet have a collegiate start under his belt, Lowry proved to be a capable runner in 2024 and now gets his chance to lead the offense.

Former MAC Freshman of the Year Jalen Buckley returns as the Broncos' workhorse in the backfield. Western Michigan also added several transfer RBs to shore up its depth and maintain a solid ground game that Lance Taylor's teams have become known for.



Jalen Buckley

Joel Bissell / MLive.com

Malique Dieudonne is back as the team's top returning wideout after being a regular part of the rotation in 2024. Third-team All-MAC TE Blake Bosma also returns, giving the passing game a reliable target. The Broncos bolstered their receiving corps with multiple impact transfers, including Georgia Tech's Christian Leary and Georgia State's Tailique Williams.

Up front, Western Michigan returns its left side with Adam Vandervest and John Hofer back in starting roles. The Broncos added serious size and pedigree through the portal, including former four-star Michigan transfer Raheem Anderson II, to help round out the line.

DEFENSE: In his first year as defensive coordinator, Scott Power didn't oversee a major turnaround, but the Broncos flashed signs of growth on that side of the ball.

Western Michigan struggled mightily against the run in 2024, allowing nearly 200 rushing yards per game. The return of former four-star EDGE Popeye Williams could spark a resurgence along a senior-heavy defensive line.

At linebacker, Domanick Moon and Dillon Moore look to step into starting roles after seeing rotational snaps last fall. The Broncos also brought in experienced Murray State transfer James Camden.

The pass defense was the team's biggest strength last year and should remain solid. All-Conference safety Tate Hallock is back alongside returning starter Aaron Wofford. At cornerback, the Broncos added Eastern Kentucky standout Jordon Thomas and former

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	@ Michigan State
Sept. 6	North Texas
Sept. 13	@ Illinois
Sept. 20	Toledo
Sept. 27	Rhode Island
Oct. 4	@ UMass
Oct. 11	Ball State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Miami (OH)
Nov. 1	Central Michigan
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 11	Ohio
Nov. 18	@ Northern Illinois
Nov. 29	@ Eastern Michigan

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	7/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	52/100

Central Michigan corner Jarvarius Sims, who brings two seasons of proven MAC production.

OVERVIEW: Lance Taylor's second season at the helm featured a strong start and some key midseason adjustments, ultimately resulting in a winning MAC record. The Broncos spent most of the fall near the top of the standings but faltered late with a three-game losing streak in November.

Taylor's coordinator hires paid early dividends and give the staff a solid foundation heading into 2025. However, a tougher conference slate looms, with four of the MAC's top five contenders appearing on the schedule.

Returning production is limited, but there's enough talent—especially from incoming transfers—to keep the Broncos competitive. Reaching a bowl game again would mark another step in the right direction for this rebuilding program.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (3-5)

BUDGE'S PLAYER RANKINGS

FOR THE 2025 SEASON

QUARTERBACKS

1. G. NUSSMEIER, LSU
2. CADE KLUBNIK, CLEM
3. L. SELLERS, SCAR
4. SAM LEAVITT, ASU
5. DREW ALLAR, PSU
6. ARCH MANNING, TEXAS
7. JULIAN SAYIN, OSU
8. KEVIN JENNINGS, SMU
9. S. ROBERTSON, BAY
10. JOHN MATEER, OU

RUNNING BACKS

1. NICK SINGLETON, PSU
2. JEREMIAH LOVE, ND
3. ISAAC BROWN, UL
4. KAYTRON ALLEN, PSU
5. MAKHI HUGHES, UO
6. JAMAL HAYNES, GA TECH
7. DARIUS TAYLOR, MINN
8. JAYDN OTT, OU
9. AHMAD HARDY, MIZZ
10. DYLAN EDWARDS, KSU

WIDE RECEIVERS

1. JEREMIAH SMITH, OSU
2. RYAN WILLIAMS, BAMA
3. CAM COLEMAN, AUB
4. A. WILLIAMS, CLEM
5. ERIC SINGLETON, AUB
6. JORDYN TYSON, ASU
7. TREBOR PENA, PSU
8. ELIJAH SARRATT, IND
9. AARON ANDERSON, LSU
10. ERIC RIVERS, GA TECH

TIGHT ENDS

1. JACK ENDRIES, TEXAS
2. ELI STOWERS, VANDY
3. JUSTIN JOLY, NC ST
4. TANNER KOZIOL, WISC
5. MAX KLARE, OSU
6. OSCAR DELP, UGA
7. TREY LECKNER, WAZZU
8. RILEY WILLIAMS, OR ST
9. LUKE HASZ, MISS
10. BRETT NORFLEET, MIZZ



Sam Leavitt

Sports Seriously

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

1. JAKE SLAUGHTER, FLA
2. SPENCER FANO, UTAH
3. FRANCIS MAUIGO, MIA
4. KADYN PROCTOR, BAMA
5. CHARLES JAGUSAH, ND
6. OLAIHAVEGA LOANE, PSU
7. JORDAN SEATON, COLO
8. A. REED-ADAMS, TAMU
9. BLAKE MILLER, CLEM
10. ISAIAH WORLD, UO

OVERALL

1. JEREMIAH SMITH, OSU
2. JAKE SLAUGHTER, FLA
3. ANTHONY HILL JR, TEXAS
4. WHIT WEEKS, LSU
5. CALEB DOWNS, OSU
6. NICK SINGLETON, PSU
7. JEREMIAH LOVE, ND
8. G. NUSSMEIER, LSU
9. RYAN WILLIAMS, BAMA
10. SPENCER FANO, UTAH
11. COLIN SIMMONS, TEXAS
12. CADE KLUBNIK, CLEM
13. TJ PARKER, CLEM
14. L. SELLERS, SCAR
15. CAM COLEMAN, AUB

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

1. COLIN SIMMONS, TEXAS
2. TJ PARKER, CLEM
3. LT OVERTON, BAMA
4. CHRISTEN MILLER, UGA
5. REUBEN BAIN JR., MIA
6. PATRICK PAYTON, LSU
7. D. DENNIS-SUTTON, PSU
8. MIKAIL KAMARA, IND
9. TYREAK SAPP, FLA
10. DAVID BAILEY, TTU

LINEBACKERS

1. ANTHONY HILL JR, TEXAS
2. WHIT WEEKS, LSU
3. AUSTIN ROMAINE, KSU
4. XAVIAN SOREY, ARK
5. SONNY STYLES, OSU
6. JASON HENDERSON, ODU
7. JACOB RODRIGUEZ, TTU
8. RED MURDOCK, BUFF
9. JACK KELLY, BYU
10. AIDEN FISHER, IND

DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. CALEB DOWNS, OSU
2. LEONARD MOORE, ND
3. CHANDLER RIVERS, DUKE
4. AVIEON TERRELL, CLEM
5. MICHAEL TAAFFE, TEXAS
6. DAYLEN EVERETTE, UGA
7. KOI PERCH, MINN
8. ELI BOWEN, OU
9. ZABIEN BROWN, BAMA
10. TACARIO DAVIS, WASH

SPECIALISTS

1. DOMINIC ZVADA, MICH
2. PEYTON WOODRING, UGA
3. RHYS DAKIN, IOWA
4. RYAN ECKLEY, MSU
5. DOM DZIOBAN, MIA (OH)
6. BRETT THORSON, UGA
7. BERT AUBURN, MIA
8. WILL FERRIN, BYU
9. RANDY BOND, TAMU
10. AIDAN BIRR, GA TECH



MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

1. BOISE STATE	12-2 (7-0)
2. UNLV	11-3 (6-1)
3. COLORADO STATE	8-5 (6-1)
4. FRESNO STATE	6-7 (4-3)
5. SAN JOSE STATE	7-6 (3-4)
6. AIR FORCE	5-7 (3-4)
7. HAWAII	5-7 (3-4)
8. NEW MEXICO	5-7 (3-4)
9. UTAH STATE	4-8 (3-4)
10. SAN DIEGO ST.	3-9 (2-5)
11. WYOMING	3-9 (2-5)
12. NEVADA	3-10 (0-7)

Boise State stormed through Mountain West play behind a historic season from Ashton Jeanty and a well-rounded supporting cast. Though 2024 was Spencer Danielson's first full season as permanent head coach, he secured his second conference title, signaling the beginning of a promising new era for the Broncos going forward.

Barry Odom and **UNLV** proved that their 2023 breakout was no fluke, returning to the Mountain West Championship Game with one of the nation's most efficient offenses. Despite early-season uncertainty at quarterback, the Rebels found their rhythm and stayed consistent—only falling short against Boise State, who handed them two of their three total losses.

Colorado State delivered its strongest campaign yet under Jay Norvell, spending much of the year atop the conference standings. While the Rams faced injuries and some offensive inconsistencies, their defense rose to the occasion, helping secure key wins and keeping them in the title hunt deep into the season.

Fresno State's year took an unexpected turn when Jeff Tedford retired just weeks before the season. Interim coach Tim Skipper did his best to steady the ship, but the Bulldogs never found their footing and barely snuck into a bowl game, falling short of their usual standard. The Bulldogs elected to move on from Skipper in the offseason to find a new face to be their permanent head coach.

San Jose State looked reinvigorated under Ken Niumatalolo, who led the Spartans to a strong season powered by one of the most explosive passing attacks in the country. Nick Nash emerged as a national standout, finishing the year as the FBS leader in receiving yards. Niumatalolo's first-year success gave the program renewed confidence in its direction.

Air Force struggled with uncharacteristic



Sire Gaines

Boise State Athletics

issues that derailed the early part of its season. The offense never fully clicked, forcing the Falcons to rely heavily on their defense. Still, a late four-game winning streak helped salvage momentum, even though the team ultimately missed out on a bowl appearance.

Hawai'i showed further signs of growth under Timmy Chang, but still came up short of a bowl bid. Offensive identity remained elusive for the Warriors, leaving Dennis Thurman's improving defense to carry much of the load for a second straight year. Hawai'i has struggled to find their offensive playcaller for multiple seasons in a row now, and it has held some talented teams back.

Bronco Mendenhall sparked a major turnaround in his first year at **New Mexico**, guiding the Lobos to their best season since 2016. After an 0-4 start, the team caught fire midseason, winning five of seven behind newfound energy on offense and resilient play across the board. Unfortunately for the Lobos, Mendenhall departed in the offseason, taking the head coaching job at Utah State.

Utah State was thrown off course by a late coaching change but still managed to field one of the most potent offenses in the league. The Aggies scored over 30 points per game and found their stride late, winning three of their final four conference matchups to close on a high note. Overall the season was a disappointment for a team that could have had a special season during normal circumstances.

Sean Lewis brought a surge of excitement to **San Diego State** in his debut campaign, but

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 23	FRES ST @ KU
Aug. 28	BSU @ USF
Aug. 29	UNLV @ SHSU
Aug. 30	GASO @ FRES ST
Sept. 6	UCLA @ UNLV
Sept. 6	FRES ST @ OR ST
Sept. 6	SHSU @ UH
Sept. 13	UTAH @ WYO
Sept. 20	UNLV @ MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 20	CAL @ SDSU
Sept. 20	UTSA @ CSU
Sept. 27	WAZZU @ CSU
Oct. 4	BSU @ ND
Oct. 4	AFA @ NAVY
Nov. 1	ARMY @ AFA

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

TROY CALHOUN, AFA	C
SPENCER DANIELSON, BSU	A+
JAY NORVELL, CSU	B+
TIM SKIPPER, FRESNO ST.	C-
TIMMY CHANG, HAWAII	C
JEFF CHOATE, NEVADA	C
BRONCO MENDENHALL, NM	B+
SEAN LEWIS, SDSU	C-
KEN NIUMATALOLO, SJSU	A-
BARRY ODOM, UNLV	A
NATE DREILING, USU	D
JAY SAWVEL, WYO	F

the results didn't match the preseason buzz. The Aztecs struggled mightily on offense, often unable to stay competitive. Still, a few breakout young players provided optimism for the future as Lewis builds his foundation.

Wyoming entered 2024 with high expectations after a nine-win season, but reality quickly unraveled under new head coach Jay Sawvel. The Cowboys regressed in nearly every phase of the game and plummeted from one of the league's best defenses to a bottom-half unit, culminating in a deeply disappointing campaign.

Nevada, led by Jeff Choate, showed grit despite a daunting schedule. While often outmatched in talent, the Wolf Pack stayed competitive throughout the season thanks to solid execution and balanced effort on both sides of the ball. There's a lot to build off of from the 2024 season for this program.

MOUNTAIN WEST CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Scottre Humphrey, NEW MEXICO

OPOY: Brayden Fowler-Nicolosi, COLORADO STATE

DPOY: Jayden Virgin-Morgan, BOISE STATE

COACH OF THE YEAR: Jason Eck, NEW MEXICO

1. BOISE STATE Casual fans might assume the Broncos are set to regress without Ashton Jeanty, but they may actually be more dangerous in 2025. Boise State brings back over half of its starters on both sides of the ball, including several All-Mountain West defenders. Veteran QB Maddux Madsen returns to lead an offense still loaded with talent, and this team is locked in on returning to the playoff conversation.

2. UNLV Dan Mullen steps into a great situation in Las Vegas and has the pieces to build on the momentum Barry Odom created. Despite heavy roster turnover, Mullen landed one of the top Group of Five transfer portal classes this offseason. The Rebels revamped both lines of scrimmage and still boast the athletes to contend for a third consecutive trip to the Mountain West title game.

3. COLORADO STATE Jay Norvell enters year four with a roster that has the potential to break through. Better injury luck would go a long way, and new defensive coordinator Tyson Summers may be the spark this unit needs. Summers brought several contributors with him from Western Kentucky, and if the defense can match the offense's upside, the Rams could be playing for a title.

4. SAN JOSE STATE Ken Niumatalolo's debut season exceeded expectations, and the Spartans return a strong nucleus on both sides of the ball. Their explosive offense should remain a strength, while longtime DC Derrick Odom provides continuity on defense. If RB Floyd Chalk IV can elevate his game, San Jose State could be in the thick of the Mountain West race again..

5. NEW MEXICO Jason Eck has transformed New Mexico's roster with a wave of FCS talent and experienced coaches, many of whom followed him from Idaho. The Lobos were among the most aggressive G5 teams in the portal and now have enviable depth at the skill positions.



Marsel McDuffie

Callie Fin / Las Vegas Review-Journal

It's a bold new direction for the program—and one that could pay off immediately.

6. FRESNO STATE There's more uncertainty than usual in Fresno, but the Bulldogs still have the talent to stay in the mix. Replacing Mikey Keene at quarterback is a major question, though a veteran offensive line and a healthier receiving corps should help ease the transition. Tim Skipper will look to stabilize the program after a turbulent 2024.

7. AIR FORCE The Falcons regressed in 2024 and must now replace several key veterans. Still, the foundation of discipline and physicality built under Troy Calhoun is firmly in place. Air Force rarely stays down long and will look to lean on its defense while the offense finds its rhythm again.

8. SAN DIEGO STATE Sean Lewis enters year two with a clearer vision and more time to implement his system, but SDSU remains a work in progress. The Aztecs are moving away from their old-school identity and into a spread-heavy scheme, and the transition won't be without growing pains. The schedule is tough, but visible improvement is within reach.

9. HAWAII Timmy Chang has the program headed in the right direction, but the Rainbow Warriors are still a year or two away. They added some nice pieces in the secondary through the portal, yet remain behind in the trenches compared to most of the conference. Flashes of promise are there, but consistency must follow.

10. UTAH STATE Bronco Mendenhall's arrival gives Utah State a proven leader with a clear

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 13	AFA @ USU
Sept. 20	BSU @ AFA
Sept. 20	FRES ST @ UH
Oct. 4	UNLV @ WYO
Oct. 11	FRES ST @ CSU
Oct. 11	UNM @ BSU
Oct. 18	UNLV @ BSU
Oct. 25	USU @ UNM
Nov. 1	FRES ST @ BSU
Nov. 1	UH @ SJSU
Nov. 8	UNLV @ CSU
Nov. 22	CSU @ BSU
Nov. 22	SJSU @ SDSU
Nov. 29	FRES ST @ SJSU
Nov. 29	UNLV @ UNR

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (62)	BOISE STATE
2. (78)	SAN DIEGO STATE
3. (87)	UTAH STATE
4. (88)	NEVADA
5. (89)	WYOMING
6. (97)	UNLV
7. (104)	FRESNO STATE
8. (107)	COLORADO STATE
9. (115)	SAN JOSE STATE
10. (124)	HAWAII
11. (129)	AIR FORCE
12. (196)	NEW MEXICO

blueprint for success. He inherits a roster with questions at quarterback and defense, but his track record suggests a culture change is imminent. A bowl trip may be ambitious in year one, but expect a more physical, competitive Aggies team.

11. NEVADA Jeff Choate begins his second season looking to generate momentum after a tough 2024 campaign. The roster still lacks depth and top-end talent, but Choate's emphasis on toughness and accountability is reshaping the culture. The climb is steep, but Nevada should be more competitive on a weekly basis.

12. WYOMING Year one of the Jay Sawvel era was a disappointment, with Wyoming struggling in every phase of the game. The offense stalled, and the defense fell far short of the standard set under Craig Bohl. The Cowboys appear headed for a full rebuild, and the road back to relevance may take time.



AIR FORCE FALCONS

HEAD COACH: Troy Calhoun
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Thiessen
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Knorr

RANK: 96

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

AIR FORCE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1998

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 72nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 6
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB David Santiago, OL Tyler Lawrence, QB Quentin Hayes, RB Owen Allen, LB Osaro Aihie

KEY ADDITIONS: LB Seth McFarland, DL Kyle Keya, DL Connor Vasek, OL Jake Sulzberger, LB Cade Spradling



Dylan Carson

Danny Wild / Imagn Images

Smith, who started in 2024, returns as a veteran presence in the receiving corps and a key blocker in the run game. The Falcons increased their passing attempts last year, throwing 138 passes compared to 105 the season prior.

The offensive line will be a strength again, anchored by returning starters Trevor Tate, Alex Falk, and Costen Cooley on the left side. This continuity will be key to flipping the narrative for this side of the football in 2025.

DEFENSE: Brian Knorr's defense carried much of the load for Air Force in 2024 and remains one of the Mountain West's best units. This defense spent a lot of time on the field last year due to the struggles Air Force had on offense. Even marginal improvement with clock control could really help this defense out.

The defensive line had some uncharacteristic struggles against the run and must improve its ability to disrupt plays in the backfield. Seniors Daniel Grobe and Jack Curtis are counted on to be key pass-rushing catalysts and to pile up tackles for loss.

The linebacker group, featuring experienced starters Luke Fisher and Blake Fletcher, will play a major role in shoring up run defense that had some issues last year.

The secondary lacks extensive starting experience this season, with no returning player having started more than half of last year's games. Kyle Chen, who appeared in seven games and started four last year while recording multiple pass deflections, is a bright spot. Still, replicating their status as the Mountain West's top pass

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Bucknell
Sept. 6	BYE
Sept. 13	@ Utah State
Sept. 20	Boise State
Sept. 27	Hawaii
Oct. 4	@ Navy
Oct. 11	@ UNLV
Oct. 18	Wyoming
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Army
Nov. 8	@ San Jose State
Nov. 15	@ UConn
Nov. 22	New Mexico
Nov. 28	@ Colorado State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	6/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	3/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	9/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	59/100

defense may prove difficult in 2025.

OVERVIEW: A disappointing 2024 season marked the end of an impressive run for Troy Calhoun's Air Force teams, which had won at least nine games in each of the previous four full seasons. Last year's squad was plagued by unusual mistakes and inconsistencies unseen in recent years.

However, Air Force enters 2025 on a hopeful note after closing the previous season with four straight wins. Context is important—this team returned near the bottom nationally in terms of production and faced a tough slate.

With many more familiar faces back and a likely more manageable schedule, the coaching staff's proven ability to produce results should lead to a bounceback campaign. If the Falcons can return to their roots by establishing a strong running game, they will be back to the level they are accustomed to competing at.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-4)

OFFENSE: Mike Thiessen enters his 16th season as Air Force's offensive coordinator, making him one of college football's longest-tenured coaches. The Falcons' offense struggled through much of 2024, failing to establish a consistent running game or control the clock.

Junior QB Josh Johnson saw early action last year and is expected to be the starter in 2025. Johnson threw three interceptions on just 14 pass attempts in 2024, so cleaning up those mistakes will be critical for his growth as the lead signal-caller.

Air Force boasts a solid stable of rushers, led by 2024's top back Dylan Carson. Cade Harris provided some rare big-play explosiveness last season and will likely receive more carries to boost the offense's big-play potential. Quin

BOISE STATE BRONCOS

HEAD COACH: Spencer Danielson
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nate Potter
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Erik Chinander, Tyler Stockton

RANK: 33



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 12-2 (7-0)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: 8th

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost in the Fiesta Bowl

BOISE STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 9th

RETURNING STARTERS: 8 offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Ashton Jeanty, DL Ahmed Hassanein, WR Cam Camper, WR Prince Stachan, LB Andrew Simpson

KEY ADDITIONS: DL Dion Washington, DB Jaylen Webb, DB Samuel Brooks, RB Malik Sherrod, OL Miles Walker

OFFENSE: Offensive coordinator Nate Potter's unit could do no wrong in 2024, thriving behind a generational talent at running back. Ironically, the absence of Ashton Jeanty this season may open things up even more, allowing the offense to spread the ball without defenses keying in on one star.

Maddux Madsen turned heads when he beat out former five-star Malachi Nelson for the starting QB job, and his stellar 2024 performance solidified his spot as the leader of this offense heading into the fall.

The search for Boise State's next elite RB shouldn't take long. Sire Gaines and Jambres Dubar are both strong internal candidates, while Fresno State transfer Malik Sherrod, a former All-MW back, adds serious firepower.



Maddux Madsen

Brian Myrick / Idaho Press

Sherrod missed most of last season due to injury but racked up over 1,400 all-purpose yards as a junior.

The pass-catching corps is quietly deep, led by returning All-MW TE Matt Lauter. Veterans Latrell Caples and Austin Bolt were under-the-radar contributors in 2024 and now have a chance to elevate their legacies in Boise.

Kage Casey, who earned All-Conference honors last year, leads a veteran-laden offensive line that returns four starters. Along with those starters, several experienced rotational linemen give Boise State arguably the top O-line in the Group of Five.

DEFENSE: Boise State's new-look defensive staff showed promise in 2024, particularly against the run, but the secondary proved vulnerable. Co-defensive coordinators Erik Chinander and Tyler Stockton will prioritize tightening up the pass defense this season.

All-MW pass rushers Jayden Virgin-Morgan and Braxton Fely return to anchor the front, and they're joined by Hawaii transfer Dion Washington, who played in all 12 games and started four last year. His addition boosts an already formidable defensive line.

While All-Conference LB Andrew Simpson transferred out, Boise State still has standout Marco Notarainni back to lead the linebacker corps. Promising players like Jake Ripp and Clay Martineau showed flashes of upside in limited roles last season and could make a leap.

The secondary returns several playmakers,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	@ South Florida
Sept. 5	Eastern Washington
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ Air Force
Sept. 27	Appalachian State
Oct. 4	@ Notre Dame
Oct. 11	New Mexico
Oct. 18	UNLV
Oct. 24	@ Nevada
Nov. 1	Fresno State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ San Diego State
Nov. 22	Colorado State
Nov. 28	@ Utah State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	13/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	12/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	75/100

including three players who recorded interceptions in 2024. Starting safety Ty Benefield—last year's leading tackler—will be the unit's anchor as the defense works to improve its coverage that was spotty at times in 2024.

OVERVIEW: Boise State rallied around head coach Spencer Danielson in his first full season and delivered one of the most impressive Group of Five campaigns in recent memory, earning a first round BYE in the first edition of the 12-team College Football Playoff.

Even with the loss of a once-in-a-generation talent like Ashton Jeanty, the Broncos are loaded with veteran experience and All-Conference talent across the board.

With a manageable schedule, proven leadership, and chances to earn big wins in the non-conference, Boise State is in strong position to make another push for a College Football Playoff berth in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 11-1 (8-0)



COLORADO STATE RAMS

HEAD COACH: Jay Norvell
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Mumme
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tyson Summers

RANK: 74

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (6-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Arizona Bowl

COLORADO STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2002

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 92nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Caleb Good-
ie, TE Vince Brown II, DL Nuer
Gatkuoth, WR Tory Horton

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Kojo
Antwi, OL William Wortmann, TE
Rocky Beers, DL Gabe Jones,
DB Jahari Rogers

OFFENSE: Colorado State's offense endured a frustratingly inconsistent 2024 season as injuries and lineup changes took their toll. Still, with better health and continuity, Matt Mumme's unit is poised to post strong numbers in 2025.

Veteran QB Brayden Fowler-Nicolosi enters his third season as the Rams' starter. His production dipped slightly last fall, but he's shown enough flashes to suggest a bounceback is on the table. With Fowler-Nicolosi at his best, Colorado State can field one of the top passing games in the conference.

Redshirt sophomore Justin Marshall served as the backup in 2024 but now steps into the lead role at RB. He rushed for over 700 yards and scored 4 TDs last year, and has the potential to thrive as the feature back.



Brayden Fowler-Nicolosi

Michael Madrid / USA Today Sports

Despite losing some key receivers, Colorado State still boasts a strong group of pass catchers. Jordan Ross and Armani Winfield return with experience, and the addition of former four-star and Ohio State transfer Kojo Antwi adds major upside. FIU transfer TE Rocky Beers could also be an impact player if he can stay healthy.

The Rams took their lumps up front last season but now return a more seasoned O-line, including 10-game starter Tanner Morley. A blend of veteran starters and promising young linemen should help the unit take a step forward in multiple areas in 2025.

DEFENSE: Colorado State's defense was inconsistent in 2024, but there's optimism with Tyson Summers now leading the group. Summers had a strong three-year run coordinating Western Kentucky's defense and returns to Fort Collins with deep familiarity with the program.

On the D-line, longtime starter Mukendi Wa-Kalonji anchors the front after starting every game last season. He'll be joined by key additions like WKU transfer JaQues Evans, who brings starting experience and disruptive ability to Colorado State's EDGE position.

At linebacker, sophomore Owen Long returns after making a big impact as a freshman. He'll be joined by Iowa State transfer Jacob Ellis, who brings Power Four experience and should slide into a starting role quickly.

The secondary was vulnerable last season, especially against the deep ball. That unit should

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Washington
Sept. 6	Northern Colorado
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	UTSA
Sept. 27	Washington State
Oct. 3	@ San Diego State
Oct. 10	Fresno State
Oct. 18	Hawaii
Oct. 25	@ Wyoming
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	UNLV
Nov. 15	@ New Mexico
Nov. 22	@ Boise State
Nov. 28	Air Force

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	66/100

improve thanks to veteran transfer additions. Former SMU corner Jahari Rogers brings four years of experience, while safety Jake Jarmolowich arrives with 15 career starts and over 100 tackles to his name.

OVERVIEW: Colorado State has made major strides since Jay Norvell's arrival, shaking off years in the Mountain West basement to become a serious conference title contender.

There's plenty to like about this year's roster, especially with the addition of defensive coordinator Tyson Summers. Not only does he bring championship credentials from his time at WKU, but he's also coached at Colorado State before and understands the landscape.

If the Rams can stay healthy and find consistency, they'll be right in the mix for the Mountain West crown—and face a critical four game stretch in November that will likely define their season.

RECORD PREDICTION: 7-5 (5-3)

FRESNO STATE BULLDOGS

HEAD COACH: Matt Entz
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Josh Davis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Benedetto

RANK: 94



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (4-3)

CONFERENCE RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Idaho Potato Bowl

FRESNO STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2022

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 116th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Mikey Keene,
WR Jalen Moss, LB Phoenix
Jackson, DB Julian Neal, DL
Jacob Holmes

KEY ADDITIONS: QB E. J. War-
ner, WR Josiah Ayon, DL Martin
Owusu, LB Jadon Pearson, DB
Simeon Harris

OFFENSE: Josh Davis joins the Bulldogs' new coaching staff as offensive coordinator after previously helping turn around the South Dakota defense, where he played a role in back-to-back deep FCS playoff runs. Now, he'll bring a fresh perspective to Fresno State's offense.

Veteran QB E.J. Warner, formerly of Rice and Temple, brings three seasons of starting experience and 58 career touchdown passes to the Valley. While he's shown plenty of talent, Warner will need to cut down on the turnovers that have followed him throughout his career.

At RB, Fresno State features one of the Mountain West's top tandems with true sophomore Bryson Donelson and experienced back Elijah Gilliam. Both backs bring different styles to the table and should give them a reliable run game.



Korey Foreman

Fresno State Athletics

There's uncertainty at wide receiver, with much of the production expected to come from incoming transfers. However, TE Richie Anderson returns as a trusted target for Warner and should be a key piece in the passing game.

The offensive line returns just two starters, including tackle Torean Penright. That unit had its ups and downs in 2024 and will need to gel quickly, but Fresno State has a track record of developing linemen and could improve as the year progresses.

DEFENSE: New defensive coordinator Nick Benedetto arrives from Northern Illinois, where he led a strong run-stopping unit that helped the Huskies to multiple successful seasons in the MAC. His experience and philosophy should benefit the Fresno State defense looking to regain its edge.

The interior of the defensive line will be young, with Auckland Asiata back after a strong freshman campaign and Minnesota transfer Martin Owusu stepping in as another sophomore with potential. At defensive end, returning starters Jahzon Jacks and former number one overall recruit Korey Foreman are poised to make life difficult for opposing QBs once again.

Replacing multiple All-MW linebackers will be a challenge, but Utah State transfer Jadon Pearson brings valuable experience and will be tasked with helping stabilize the middle of the defense.

In the secondary, veteran safety Jayden Davis leads a group that needs more proven production. The Bulldogs turned to the portal for help,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	@ Kansas
Aug. 30	Georgia Southern
Sept. 6	@ Oregon State
Sept. 13	Southern
Sept. 20	@ Hawaii
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Nevada
Oct. 10	@ Colorado State
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	San Diego State
Nov. 1	@ Boise State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Wyoming
Nov. 22	Utah State
Nov. 29	@ San Jose State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	59/100

landing Northern Illinois safety Ethan Tierney and former Utah State DB Simeon Harris—who had once committed to Fresno State out of high school.

OVERVIEW: Fresno State begins a new era under head coach Matt Entz, who arrives with championship credentials. Entz won two FCS national titles at North Dakota State and most recently served as USC's linebackers coach.

One question mark for Entz is how he'll handle a program that isn't already built for dominance—North Dakota State was a dynasty before he took over. That said, Fresno State is far from a teardown and has the infrastructure and history to remain a Mountain West contender.

While the long-term ceiling of this coaching staff is still to be determined, the short-term outlook is promising. With the right adjustments and contributions from their transfers, the Bulldogs should stay competitive right away.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-4)



HAWAI'I RAINBOW WARRIORS

HEAD COACH: Timmy Chang
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Anthony Arceneaux
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dennis Thurman

RANK: 103

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

HAWAI'I AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2010

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 61st

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Brayden Schager, OL Ka'ena Decambra, WR Koali Nishigaya, DL Dion Washington

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jackson Harris, DL De'Jon Benton, OL Ricky Wells, QB Luke Weaver, DL Luther McCoy

OFFENSE: For the third straight year, Hawai'i will break in a new offensive coordinator—this time turning to Anthony Arceneaux, a Saint Louis alum who spent the past two seasons as Nevada's WRs coach. Arceneaux inherits a young offense that's high on potential.

Redshirt freshman Micah Alejandro, a touted three-star recruit, impressed in his first career start to close the 2024 season and will lead the offense in 2025. Behind him is JUCO transfer Luke Weaver, who brings a prolific résumé after throwing for over 5,000 yards and 44 TDs in two seasons.

The Warriors return their leading rusher in Landon Sims, though the run game struggled mightily last year—Sims didn't crack 400 yards, and the team ranked near the bottom of the



Nick Cenacle

Hawaii Athletics

conference in rushing. With a run-and-shoot scheme still in place, the ground game may again take a backseat.

Hawai'i does have a strong and proven WR room, headlined by returning top targets Nick Cenacle and Pofele Ashlock. Stanford transfer Jackson Harris adds another intriguing option after seeing action in half of the Cardinal's games last year.

Up front, veteran tackle Sergio Muasau will anchor the offensive line. The Warriors allowed 43 sacks in 2024, so better protection will be a top priority if the offense is to take a step forward in 2025.

DEFENSE: Dennis Thurman's defense brought a gritty identity to the team last season, keeping Hawai'i competitive by limiting damage through the air. That strong pass defense helped control tempo and kept games manageable.

The D-line is well-stocked on the interior, returning starter Jamar Sekona—who missed the latter part of 2024 due to injury—and adding experienced transfer De'Jon Benton from USC and New Mexico. Edge rusher Elijah Robinson is back after earning All-MW honorable mention with a team-high five sacks.

Two of the team's top three tacklers return at linebacker, but depth is a concern. Juniors like Jamih Otis and Tasi Tadio will need to grow into larger roles quickly, as this group can't afford many injuries.

The secondary is a clear strength, led by returning starting safeties Peter Manuma and Kilinahe

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	Stanford
Aug. 30	@ Arizona
Sept. 6	Sam Houston
Sept. 13	Portland State
Sept. 20	Fresno State
Sept. 27	@ Air Force
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Utah State
Oct. 18	@ Colorado State
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ San Jose State
Nov. 8	San Diego State
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 21	@ UNLV
Nov. 29	Wyoming

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	3/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	57/100

Mendiola-Jensen, who were instrumental in the unit's success against the pass last season. Expect this group to again be the defensive backbone.

OVERVIEW: The 2024 season marked another step forward for Timmy Chang's rebuild at his alma mater. Hawai'i has improved its win total each year under Chang, even amid some instability on his staff.

Another encouraging trend has been how the Warriors close out seasons—they won three of their final five games in 2024 and three of four to end the season the year prior. On the flip side, Hawai'i has had some brutal starts to the season under Chang, where they've looked lost.

With stability at quarterback and in the secondary, plus a trusted defensive coordinator in place, 2025 may finally be the year Hawai'i returns to bowl eligibility for the first time since 2021.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (3-5)

NEVADA WOLFPACK

HEAD COACH: Jeff Choate
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Gilbertson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kane Loane

RANK: 117



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-10 (0-7)

CONFERENCE RANK: 12th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

NEVADA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2005

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 132nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Isaiah World,
DB Chad Brown, DB Michael
Coats Jr., QB Brendon Lewis,
RB Savion Red

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Herschel
Turner, OL Hadine Diaby, WR
Jordan Brown, LB Nahji Logan,
DB Murvin Kenion III

OFFENSE: Jeff Choate promoted QBs and RBs coach David Gilbertson to offensive coordinator this offseason. Gilbertson brings experience from his time as Akron's pass game coordinator before joining the Nevada staff.

Journeyman QB Chubba Purdy finally gets his shot to start after backing up in 2024. The former Florida State and Nebraska signal caller has yet to fully establish himself, but his dual-threat ability could be a valuable asset for the Wolfpack.

Nevada's run game is in good hands. Former Utah State RB Herschel Turner averaged over five yards per carry as a freshman and joins senior Caleb Ramseur, who was a steady rotational back in 2024. With a mobile QB and two capable backs, Nevada is positioned to build



Chubba Purdy

Nevada Athletics

on last season's success on the ground.

At wide receiver, Marcus Bellon returns after tallying 500 yards and four TDs last year, and he's joined by Texas Tech transfer Jordan Brown, who brings Power Five experience and production. Former Dartmouth TE Jace Henry had a pair of TDs last season and could make progress toward replicating the solid numbers he had with the Big Green.

The O-line will be anchored by three-year starting center Andrew Madrigal and emerging lineman Josh Grabowski. Nevada also mined the FCS ranks for talent, adding 2024 starters Hadine Diaby and Jack Foster to bolster a unit that's quietly developed well under Choate's staff.

DEFENSE: Despite being consistently out-manned talent-wise in 2024, Kane Loane's defense turned in several respectable efforts and kept Nevada competitive in many games.

The run defense could take a step forward this year with the return of starting tackles Nelson Ropati and Thomas Witte. The pass rush won't be as experienced, but several returning ends saw meaningful snaps last year and should be ready to contribute more heavily.

Linebacker Stone Combs played in every game in 2024 and made four starts, showing steady development. He'll be joined by a group of transfers, including Nahji Logan, who saw special teams action at Indiana and arrives looking for an expanded role.

The secondary was a strength last season,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Penn State
Sept. 6	Sacramento State
Sept. 13	Middle Tennessee
Sept. 20	@ Western Kentucky
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Fresno State
Oct. 11	San Diego State
Oct. 18	@ New Mexico
Oct. 24	Boise State
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Utah State
Nov. 15	San Jose State
Nov. 22	@ Wyoming
Nov. 29	UNLV

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	54/100

but turnover leaves the unit thin on returning experience. To patch that up, Nevada brought in Bowling Green's Edward Rhambo and UTEP starter AJ Odums at corner, plus Sacramento State transfer Murvin Kenion III, who logged over 50 tackles and started every game in 2024.

OVERVIEW: Nevada went just 3-10 last season, but the record doesn't tell the whole story. Under Jeff Choate, the Wolfpack were scrappy, competitive, and routinely pushed more talented opponents to the brink—losing six games by one score.

They return to a 12-game schedule this year and face a much friendlier non-conference slate, which could directly lead to an improved record for the Wolfpack.

While a breakout season may still be a year away, 2025 should bring further signs that Nevada is building something solid under Choate.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)



NEW MEXICO LOBOS

HEAD COACH: Jason Eck
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Luke Schleusner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Spence Nowinsky

RANK: 92

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 8th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A



Jack Layne

John Austria / Albuquerque Journal

NEW MEXICO AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1964

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 135th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Devon Dampier, RB NaQuari Rogers, WR Luke Wyson, DB Christian Ellis, DB Noah Avinger

KEY ADDITIONS: RB Scottre Humphrey, QB Jack Layne, WR Keagan Johnson, DL Brian Booker, DL Darren Agu

OFFENSE: Jason Eck and his offensive coordinator from Idaho, Luke Schleusner, bring their respected FCS system to New Mexico this season. It'll be nearly a complete overhaul for the Lobos, who saw the majority of their key contributors from 2024 depart.

At QB, the staff turns to a familiar face in Jack Layne, who started multiple games at Idaho last year, including two in the FCS playoffs. Layne threw five touchdowns to just one interception in those postseason appearances and has already proven he can lead this offense.

New Mexico's RB room might be the deepest position group in the entire Mountain West. Montana State transfer Scottre Humphrey rushed for nearly 1,400 yards last season, Idaho's Deshaun Buchanan added 567 more, and

Weber State's Damon Bankston eclipsed 1,100 yards. It's an embarrassment of riches for the Lobos in the backfield.

The WR group may not be quite as stacked, but there's still plenty of intrigue. Kansas State transfer Keagan Johnson brings Power Five experience and totaled 400 yards in eight starts. JUCO WR Isaiah Blair hauled in six touchdowns last season and adds a vertical threat.

Despite some key losses up front, senior captain Richard Pearce returns at guard, and Tevin Shaw should reclaim a starting spot after missing most of 2024 due to injury. To help solidify the trenches, the Lobos added FCS starters RJ Adams and Israel Mukwiza, continuing their trend of plucking top-tier FCS talent.

DEFENSE: New Mexico made a strong hire at defensive coordinator in Spence Nowinsky, who spent last season as co-DC at Memphis and has over 15 years of experience running defenses.

FCS All-American and Idaho transfer Keyshawn James-Newby headlines the revamped D-line and gives the Lobos an immediate impact pass rusher. He'll pair with junior Vanderbilt transfer Darren Agu to form a potentially dangerous edge duo, though interior depth at tackle remains a question.

Linebacker looks like a position of strength, with 2024 starters Dimitri Johnson and Randolph Kpai returning to anchor the middle of the defense after solid campaigns.

The secondary needed major attention after

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Michigan
Sept. 6	Idaho State
Sept. 12	@ UCLA
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	New Mexico State
Oct. 3	@ San Jose State
Oct. 11	@ Boise State
Oct. 18	Nevada
Oct. 25	Utah State
Nov. 1	@ UNLV
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Colorado State
Nov. 22	@ Air Force
Nov. 28	San Diego State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	60/100

finishing last in the Mountain West against the pass, and the staff responded with a complete rebuild. New additions include Idaho transfer Abraham Williams, Northern Iowa starter Albert Nunes, and Ohio's Austin Brawley, who recorded 38 tackles and an interception last year.

OVERVIEW: New Mexico has gone from one well-regarded hire to another in back-to-back seasons. Jason Eck emerged this offseason as a near-perfect replacement and wasted no time reshaping the program.

Eck rapidly turned around Idaho and brought much of that staff—and system—with him. His reputation alone helped lure an impressive wave of FCS talent to Albuquerque.

Despite significant offseason departures, the Lobos are in a strong position to compete right away under Eck. This may be one of the most intriguing year-one rebuilds in the entire Group of Five.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-5)

SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS

HEAD COACH: Sean Lewis
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Zac Barton
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rob Aurich

RANK: 101



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 10th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

SAN DIEGO STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2016

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 82nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Louis Brown
IV, QB Danny O'Neil, RB Mar-
quez Cooper, LB Kyle Moretti

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jacob
Bostick, QB Jayden Denegal, OL
Bayo Kannike, TE Seth Adams,
DL Malavhi Fianu

OFFENSE: Head coach Sean Lewis will retain playcalling duties this season for the Aztecs. While San Diego State still struggled to generate consistent offense in 2024, there were signs of marginal improvement from the dismal 2023 output.

The Aztecs took a hit with the transfer of QB Danny O'Neil after a promising freshman year. This year, the Aztecs will turn to either Michigan transfer Jayden Denegal or former Central Michigan backup Bert Emmanuel Jr. Denegal is the more heralded prospect, but Emmanuel's rushing ability could still earn him a role even if he doesn't win the starting job.

San Diego State will look to former developmental back Lucky Sutton to step into a larger role in the run game. He'll be joined by Christian



Trey White

San Diego State Athletics

Washington, a productive addition from the portal who rushed for over 500 yards as a sophomore.

At wide receiver, Jordan Napier returns after being one of the Aztecs' top pass catchers in 2024. He'll be complemented by incoming transfers Jacob Bostick from Texas A&M and Myles Kitt-Denton, an FCS standout from Northwestern State.

The O-line brings back three senior starters, including Ross Ulugalu-Maseuli at center. They'll also benefit from the addition of Michigan State transfer Dallas Fincher, who's expected to compete for a starting role right away.

DEFENSE: New defensive coordinator Rob Aurich arrives from Idaho, where he helped engineer a defensive resurgence for the Vandals. He takes over a San Diego State defense returning a significant core of contributors.

Stopping the run was a major issue for the Aztecs last season, but with three returning starters on the defensive line, there's reason for optimism. All-Mountain West edge rusher Trey White is back after posting 12.5 sacks, while Krishna Clay returns to anchor the interior.

At linebacker, Tano Letuli is back in his starting role, and Owen Chambliss looks poised to take a step forward after gaining experience with a few starts in 2024. Portal additions have bolstered the depth behind them, which should lead to more consistent play from this group.

The secondary showed promise last year and brings back all four starters. Safeties Eric Butler

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Stony Brook
Sept. 6	@ Washington State
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	California
Sept. 27	@ Northern Illinois
Oct. 3	Colorado State
Oct. 11	@ Nevada
Oct. 18	BYE
Oct. 25	@ Fresno State
Nov. 1	Wyoming
Nov. 8	@ Hawaii
Nov. 15	Boise State
Nov. 22	San Jose State
Nov. 28	@ New Mexico

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	58/100

and Dalesean Staley return alongside corners Chris Johnson and Bryce Phillips. This group is set up to be one of the better pass defenses in the conference.

OVERVIEW: Year one under Sean Lewis didn't quite meet expectations, with a stagnant offense and some staff hires falling short of the mark. Still, there were signs of a foundation being built.

Lewis made key adjustments to his staff this off-season and returns a strong defensive core that should help stabilize things. His track record shows that year two often brings major strides—his Kent State team made a bowl in his second season, following a tough first campaign.

With a clearer offensive identity, key defensive continuity, and a more manageable schedule, San Diego State looks poised to take a leap in 2025. A bowl appearance should be well within reach.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)



SAN JOSE STATE SPARTANS

HEAD COACH: Ken Niumatalolo
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Craig Stutzmann
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Derrick Odum

RANK: 91

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (3-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Hawaii Bowl

SAN JOSE STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2020

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 63rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Nick Nash, DB
Michael Dansby, DB DJ Harvey,
DB Robert Rahimi

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Danny
Scudero, WR Malachi Riley,
DB Runye Norton, OL Simeon
Afalava, DL Vili Taufatofua

OFFENSE: San Jose State fielded the most one-dimensional offense in the Mountain West last season—first in passing yards, dead last in rushing. Craig Stutzmann's system still proved effective, but the Spartans may need more ground production in 2025 to sustain drives and ease the burden on their quarterback.

The team made the switch to Walker Eget at QB midway through the year and committed to him down the stretch. His best showing came in the regular season finale against Stanford, where he threw for nearly 400 yards and four touchdowns—flashing real upside for this fall.

The Spartans are equipped to support a more balanced attack, led by returning RB Floyd Chalk IV, who ran for over 700 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2024. Backups Jabari Bates and



Floyd Chalk IV

Cody Tucker / 7220 Sports

Lamar Radcliffe also saw meaningful snaps last season and bolster a deep, experienced backfield.

Replacing Biletnikoff finalist Nick Nash will be no small task. To help fill that void, the Spartans brought in Sacramento State standout Danny Scudero and added a pair of power conference transfers looking for more opportunity after quiet 2024 campaigns.

San Jose State's O-line was one of the best in the conference at pass protection, and that strength should continue with the return of starters Peseit Lapuaho and Sione Nomani. The program's emphasis on upgrading size and skill in the trenches under Ken Niumatalolo was one of its biggest offseason successes.

DEFENSE: Longtime defensive coordinator Derrick Odum continues to deliver, helping the Spartans maintain consistency through a head coaching transition and producing another strong unit in 2024.

San Jose State's D-line was disruptive last season and could be even better this year. Quincy Likio returns after missing most of 2024 due to injury, and the interior will be anchored by All-MW tackle Gafa Faga, part of a deep and experienced group.

At linebacker, Jordan Pollard returns after an All-Conference season. He'll be joined by fellow seniors Noah McNeal-Franklin and Ethan Powell, who were key to the defense's ability to create chaos behind the line of scrimmage.

The secondary was hit hard by the transfer

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Central Michigan
Sept. 6	@ Texas
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	Idaho
Sept. 27	@ Stanford
Oct. 3	New Mexico
Oct. 11	@ Wyoming
Oct. 17	@ Utah State
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	Hawaii
Nov. 8	Air Force
Nov. 15	@ Nevada
Nov. 22	@ San Diego State
Nov. 29	Fresno State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	60/100

portal, losing several key pieces. Starting safety Isaiah Revis is the lone returner, bringing back experience and two interceptions from last season. JUCO addition Runye Norton is one of the new faces who could earn a starting role early.

OVERVIEW: Ken Niumatalolo and his new staff didn't miss a beat in their first season, keeping the Spartans competitive and being just a couple of plays away from delivering a nine win season.

While the high-powered passing game was a clear strength, San Jose State's complete lack of a 100-yard rushing performance all year was an indicator of their weakness. Developing a credible run threat could be the final piece needed for a breakthrough.

With Odum leading a proven defense and Eget gaining confidence at QB, the Spartans are in position to contend—especially if they can finally find balance on offense.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (6-2)

UNLV REBELS

HEAD COACH: Dan Mullen
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Corey Dennis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Guenther

RANK: 72



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 11-3 (6-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: 23rd

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the LA Bowl

UNLV AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 129th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2 offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: WR Jacob De Jesus, QB Matthew Sluka, QB Hajj-Malik Williams, WR Casey Cain, LB Fisher Camac, DB Tony Grimes

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Troy Omeire, WR JoJo Earle, OL Reid Williams, QB Alex Orji, DL Jalen Lee, DB Jaheem Joseph

OFFENSE: Dan Mullen tabbed rising star Corey Dennis to be his offensive coordinator in 2025. Just 32 years old, Dennis served as Tulsa's pass game coordinator and QBs coach in 2024 and is widely viewed as one of the sport's up-and-coming coaches.

UNLV has multiple intriguing options at QB. Michigan transfer Alex Orji brings several starts and a strong running ability, while Virginia transfer Anthony Colandrea is the more polished passer with plenty of starting experience. A two-QB approach is likely, with each player's skillset utilized situationally.

The Rebels return All-MW RB Jai'Den Thomas, who rushed for over 900 yards last season and will again be the featured back. They've also added Jaylon Glover, a talented runner from



Jai'Den Thomas

UNLV Athletics

Utah who played a key role in 2023 but saw limited action last fall.

JoJo Earle (TCU) and Troy Omeire (Arizona State) are intriguing portal pickups at WR, both highly recruited prospects who were buried on deep depth charts. Returning target Jaden Bradley brings proven production and experience to round out the receiving corps.

UNLV's offensive line needed a full rebuild after heavy offseason attrition. The staff responded by bringing in several experienced transfers, including All-SoCon performer Reid Williams. The return of promising underclassmen like Toby Moore helps solidify the unit.

DEFENSE: After defensive coordinator Zach Arnett unexpectedly resigned in the spring, Mullen pivoted to veteran NFL assistant Paul Guenther. Most recently the defensive run game coordinator for the Dallas Cowboys, Guenther brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective.

UNLV completely overhauled its defensive line. Coastal Carolina transfer Cohen Fuller and former LSU contributor Jalen Lee highlight the new additions at tackle, giving the Rebels a chance to be more stout up front.

Linebacker Marsel McDuffie is the lone returning starter in the middle of the defense. He'll be joined by a new cast that includes Bryce Edmondson, one of the more experienced portal additions and a likely immediate contributor.

The secondary may be the most improved unit on the team. Former five-star Denver Harris

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	@ Sam Houston
Sept. 6	UCLA
Sept. 13	Idaho State
Sept. 20	@ Miami (OH)
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Wyoming
Oct. 11	Air Force
Oct. 18	@ Boise State
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ New Mexico
Nov. 8	@ Colorado State
Nov. 15	Utah State
Nov. 21	Hawaii
Nov. 29	@ Nevada

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	63/100

headlines a haul of high-upside transfers aimed at elevating what was an inconsistent group in 2024.

OVERVIEW: Dan Mullen's return to coaching comes with the challenge of maintaining the momentum Barry Odom built during his short but impactful tenure at UNLV. Odom turned the Rebels from conference bottom-dwellers to legitimate contenders in just two years.

Mullen, a respected offensive mind, has assembled a staff full of recognizable names. While Arnett's departure was an unexpected shake-up, the hiring of Guenther provides stability and NFL-caliber leadership on defense.

There's undeniable roster turnover, but also undeniable talent. With sound coaching and a deep portal class, UNLV has the pieces in place to stay competitive in 2025 and avoid the kind of regression that often follows a coaching change.

RECORD PREDICTION: 10-2 (6-2)



UTAH STATE AGGIES

HEAD COACH: Bronco Mendenhall
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin McGiven
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Nick Howell

RANK: 104

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (3-4)

CONFERENCE RANK: 9th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

UTAH STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 124th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: LB Max Alford,
DB Jaiden Francois, OL Teague
Anderson, RB Rahsul Faison,
WR Otto Tia

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Demick
Starling, RB Miles Davis, OL
Jake Eichorn, DL Tryee Morris,
DB Noah Avinger

OFFENSE: Utah State brings back the framework of an offense that averaged over 30 points per game, and now welcomes Kevin McGiven as offensive coordinator. McGiven comes from San Jose State, where he served as passing game coordinator for a unit that led the Mountain West in passing yards last season.

QB Bryson Barnes, who got three starts in 2024, returns with valuable experience. Across his time at Utah and Utah State, he's proven to be a steady game manager with the added bonus of being a capable runner.

The Aggies will turn to Javen Jacobs—who followed head coach Bronco Mendenhall from New Mexico State—to lead the RB room. They also added BYU transfer Miles Davis, giving them a strong one-two punch in the backfield.



Bryson Barnes

Utah State Athletics

Utah State did lose much of its production at WR, but rotation piece Jack Hestera returns and should take on a larger role. Portal additions like Demick Starling (Virginia/WKU) and Corey Thompson Jr. (UNLV) bring speed and upside to the receiver room.

Most of the offensive line remains intact from last season, including starting guards George Maile and Tavo Motu'apuaka. BYU transfer Jake Eichorn will take over at center and help this group maintain its continuity and production.

DEFENSE: New defensive coordinator Nick Howell follows Mendenhall from New Mexico, where he held the same role in 2024. The Lobos struggled defensively last year, so Howell enters with pressure to elevate a Utah State unit that showed flashes but lacked consistency.

The Aggies hit the portal hard to improve the defensive front. All-Patriot League DT Tyree Morris and EDGE Antoine Harris Jr. (New Mexico) are expected to provide an immediate impact.

At LB, Utah State returns key contributors John Miller and Bronson Olevao Jr., who combined for 75 tackles and 5.5 sacks last season. Depth was a concern in the offseason, but the Aggies addressed it with several portal additions that could help in a big way.

The secondary brings in multiple familiar faces from New Mexico, including All-MW honorable mention CB Noah Avinger, starter Bryson Taylor, and safety Bobby Arnold. Veteran safety Ike Larsen is the lone returning starter, and this group will aim to rebound after finishing near

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	UTEP
Sept. 6	@ Texas A&M
Sept. 13	Air Force
Sept. 20	McNeese
Sept. 27	@ Vanderbilt
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Hawaii
Oct. 17	San Jose State
Oct. 25	@ New Mexico
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	Nevada
Nov. 15	@ UNLV
Nov. 22	@ Fresno State
Nov. 28	Boise State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	57/100

the bottom of the league in pass defense.

OVERVIEW: Bronco Mendenhall reminded everyone last season that he can still coach, guiding a depleted New Mexico squad to competitiveness.

At Utah State, he inherits a program that was thrown off course in 2024 after firing its head coach just a month before the season began. Stability and leadership alone should go a long way.

While Mendenhall brings experience and structure, several of the offensive staffers and weapons who helped him succeed at New Mexico didn't follow him to Logan. That said, there's still a solid base to build on.

There's plenty of work ahead to turn Utah State into a contender again, but in their final year as a Mountain West member, the Aggies are positioned to take a meaningful step forward.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-5)

WYOMING COWBOYS

HEAD COACH: Jay Sawvel
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Aaron Bohl

RANK: 120



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (2-5)

CONFERENCE RANK: 11th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

WYOMING AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Mountain West

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
1993

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 28th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Sebastian
Harsh, WR Braden Siders, WR
Justin Stevenson, DL Jaden
Williams, DL Ethan Day

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Jackson
Holman, DL Brayden Wilson, LB
Ethan Stuhlsatz, DB Desman
Hearns, DB Justin Taylor

OFFENSE: Jay Johnson returns for his second season as Wyoming's offensive coordinator, looking to flip a less than satisfactory output from 2024. The Cowboys didn't excel in any one offensive category last year, and improvement across the board is needed.

QB Kaden Anderson saw limited action as a redshirt freshman last season but delivered a memorable 4-TD performance in a win over New Mexico. Anderson is the likely starter, but Wyoming also added JUCO QB Landon Sims, who brings valuable starting experience to the competition.

Leading rusher Sam Scott returns after rushing for 400 yards and three touchdowns in 2024. The backfield is bolstered by incoming Charlotte transfer Terron Kellman, who appeared in



Jaylen Sargent

Troy Babbitt / Wyoming Tribune

17 games over two seasons and rushed for 570 yards.

Wyoming's most exciting group of returners are the pass catchers. Jaylen Sargent, Chris Durr Jr., and tight end John Michael Gyllenborg combined for nearly half of the Cowboys' receiving yards last season and all return to the starting lineup.

Anchoring the offensive line is a solid foundation of All-Mountain West honorable mention center Jack Walsh, tackle Caden Barnett, and guard Wes King. Wyoming hopes to build on its solid running game and improve a pass blocking unit that struggled in 2024.

DEFENSE: Wyoming's 2024 season saw a surprising defensive regression. The Cowboys dropped from one of the conference's top units to finishing in the bottom half in both yards and points allowed. Aaron Bohl will get another crack at fixing things as their returning defensive coordinator.

The pass rush features an exciting duo in Tyce Westland and Weber State transfer Brayden Wilson, a two-time All-Big Sky selection. The interior defensive line boasts solid experience, with redshirt sophomore Jayden Williams appearing in every game last year.

Linebacker depth was bolstered by additions from lower divisions, including All-Conference honorees Brayden Johnson from Division II and Ethan Stuhlsatz from the FCS.

Wyoming's defensive strength in 2024 was its pass defense, and the secondary returns

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Akron
Sept. 6	Northern Iowa
Sept. 13	Utah
Sept. 20	@ Colorado
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	UNLV
Oct. 11	San Jose State
Oct. 18	@ Air Force
Oct. 25	Colorado State
Nov. 1	@ San Diego State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Fresno State
Nov. 22	Nevada
Nov. 29	@ Hawaii

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	7/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	52/100

players like Keany Parks and Ian Bell. Southern Illinois transfer Desman Hearns also joins the secondary, having appeared in every game since arriving on campus.

OVERVIEW: Jay Sawvel's first year at Wyoming was meant to be a smooth passing of the torch into a new era of Cowboys football. Instead, 2024 was marked by a disastrous blowout loss in the opener, an upset defeat by an FCS program, and a six-win drop from 2023.

Several factors likely contributed to the unexpected outcome, including perhaps overly high expectations for a team that lost more key players than it appeared. Still, Wyoming returns a large number of contributors and is running it back with the same coordinators in hopes to rediscover their identity.

2025 will be a critical year for Sawvel as he looks to prove the investment made by the Wyoming administration was worth it.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)



SUN BELT CONFERENCE 2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

2024 FINAL STANDINGS

WEST

1. LOUISIANA	10-4 (7-1)
2. TEXAS STATE	8-5 (5-3)
3. ARKANSAS STATE	8-5 (5-3)
4. SOUTH ALABAMA	7-6 (5-3)
5. UL MONROE	5-7 (3-5)
6. TROY	4-8 (3-5)
7. SOUTHERN MISS	1-11 (0-8)

EAST

1. MARSHALL	10-3 (7-1)
2. GA. SOUTHERN	8-5 (6-2)
3. JAMES MADISON	9-4 (4-4)
4. OLD DOMINION	5-7 (4-4)
5. C. CAROLINA	6-7 (3-5)
6. APPALACHIAN ST.	5-6 (3-5)
7. GEORGIA STATE	3-9 (1-7)

A dominant defense and physical brand of football helped **Marshall** secure the Sun Belt title in 2024. The Herd steadily improved as the season went on, winning their final seven games and leaning on their consistency to grind out close wins. It was a memorable season in Huntington, but it ended with uncertainty as head coach Charles Huff departed for Southern Miss and a number of key contributors hit the transfer portal.

Louisiana was one of the league's most complete and dependable teams. Their offense wasn't always flashy, but the Ragin' Cajuns controlled games with tempo and minimized mistakes. Michael Desormeaux's team showed steady improvement as the season went on and looked like one of the league's most prepared teams week to week.

Georgia Southern kept itself in the mix with an aggressive approach on offense and a more opportunistic defense than in years past. Clay Helton's team surged down the stretch and stayed in the Sun Belt title hunt until late in the season.

For the second straight year, **Texas State** was one of the most entertaining teams in the conference. The Bobcats played fast, aggressive, and fearless, and were a legitimate threat in every game they played. A couple of missed opportunities kept them from finishing higher in the standings, but G.J. Kinne continued to establish an excellent long-term identity.

One of the biggest turnarounds in the conference came from **Arkansas State**, where the Red Wolves silenced plenty of doubters. After early struggles in 2023, they looked like a more confident and competent program in 2024.



David Godsey Jr.

Louisiana Monroe Athletics

There were moments where **South Alabama** looked like one of the most dangerous teams in the league, but their inconsistency kept them from truly contending. The Jaguars were a hard team to figure out, as they followed up impressive wins with head-scratching losses.

Despite an excellent offseason stacking talent, **James Madison** never found the same rhythm they had in 2023 during Bob Chesney's first season. The Dukes were still fundamentally strong, but a few tight losses and a drop in overall explosiveness kept them out of serious title contention.

Ricky Rahne's **Old Dominion** team nearly pulled off a pair of impressive upsets in the non-conference, and rode that momentum into a solid start to Sun Belt play. Several stars emerged, but inconsistency cost them an opportunity to go to a bowl game.

Coastal Carolina opened the year looking like a potential sleeper, but a rough second half undid much of their early momentum. A tough closing stretch exposed the Chanticleers' flaws and left them looking for answers as they head into a pivotal offseason.

It was a successful **UL Monroe** in Bryant Vincent's first season as the head coach. An early season surge gave the Warhawks brief bowl hopes, but they ultimately faded as the year wore on.

The frustration in Boone was palpable as **Appalachian State** slid into the bottom half of the conference. The Mountaineers simply couldn't close out games, losing several matchups in

KEY NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

Aug. 28	APP ST vs CLT
Aug. 30	CCU @ UVA
Aug. 30	GASO @ FRES ST
Aug. 30	RICE @ ULL
Aug. 30	MISS ST @ USM
Sept. 6	TUL @ USA
Sept. 6	JMU @ UL
Sept. 13	ECU @ CCU
Sept. 13	JVST @ GASO
Sept. 13	ODU @ VA TECH
Sept. 13	ISU @ ARK ST
Sept. 20	GA STATE @ VANDY
Sept. 20	JMU @ LIB
Sept. 27	APP ST @ BSU
Oct. 4	OR ST @ APP ST

2024 HEAD COACH GRADES

SHAWN CLARK, APP ST	D+
BUTCH JONES, ARK ST	C+
TIM BECK, CCU	C-
CLAY HELTON, GASO	B+
DELL MCGEE, GA ST	D
BOB CHESNEY, JMU	B+
M. DESORMEAUX, ULL	A
BRYANT VINCENT, ULM	B
CHARLES HUFF, MU	A+
RICKY RAHNE, ODU	C
MAJOR APPLEWHITE, USA	B-
WILL HALL, USM	F
G. J. KINNE, TX ST	A-
GERAD PARKER, TROY	D+

the final minutes. Head coach Shawn Clark was fired at seasons end.

After dominating the league in recent seasons, **Troy** crashed hard in 2024. Gerad Parker struggled to find ways to score, and squandered a solid defensive season.

Georgia State found itself on the wrong end of several one-possession games and couldn't shake the offensive inconsistency that plagued them most of the year. There were flashes of potential, but not enough to produce results in conference play.

Will Hall needed big time results to keep his job at **Southern Miss**, but flamed out in spectacular fashion with a 1-6 start to the season that saw him fired before the year was over.

SUN BELT CONFERENCE

2025 SEASON PROJECTIONS

2025 AWARD PREDICTIONS

MVP: Camden Coleman, JAMES MADISON

OPOY: Colton Joseph, OLD DOMINION

DPOY: Xavier Holmes, JAMES MADISON

COACH OF THE YEAR: Ricky Rahne, OLD DOMINION

1. JAMES MADISON With a veteran roster returning and a full offseason to recalibrate, expectations are high in Harrisonburg. The defense projects to be one of the best in the group of five, and excellent quarterback play could be the key to a special season.

2. TEXAS STATE G.J. Kinne continues to build something explosive in San Marcos. The Bobcats return key contributors on both sides of the ball and fortified their roster with one of the strongest portal classes in the conference. If they can find a bit more consistency on defense and capitalize on a more favorable schedule, Texas State could be in position to win their first Sun Belt title.

3. LOUISIANA Michael Desormeaux has a steady, disciplined group that plays fundamentally sound football and rarely beats itself. The core remains intact from last year's strong campaign, and this team looks like one of the most balanced squads in the Sun Belt.

4. OLD DOMINION Ricky Rahne's squad could be in for a breakout season with a high number of returning contributors and a few fantastic elements to their roster like their LB corps. If rising star Colton Joseph has a good encore season, the Monarchs could rise quickly.

5. GEORGIA SOUTHERN Clay Helton's squad is always dangerous thanks to a high-powered passing attack and the kind of offensive tempo that forces opponents to adjust. There's enough firepower to beat anyone in the league, but how far Georgia Southern goes in 2025 depends on defensive consistency.

6. SOUTH ALABAMA South Alabama has an excellent talent roster, especially in the trenches, but suffered from some tough portal losses in the spring. The offense did a nice job of reloading, so the pressure may be on the defense to perform this season in order for the Jaguars to realize their full potential.



Walker Howard

Jamarcus Fitzpatrick / KATC

7. SOUTHERN MISS Expect a more competitive product out of Hattiesburg this fall. Southern Miss has the reigning Sun Belt championship head coach in Charles Huff and a plethora of players from Marshall that could instantly flip the Golden Eagles into Sun Belt contention.

8. COASTAL CAROLINA While the talent level is still solid, Coastal hasn't looked like the same program that dominated the league just a few seasons ago. The 2025 version should be more disciplined defensively and could surprise if they can find steady quarterback play.

9. APPALACHIAN STATE Dowell Loggains enters his first season as a head coach with an opportunity to flex his playcalling abilities on offense. The biggest questions for the Mountaineers this season will be about how their defense looks.

10. LOUISIANA MONROE ULM showed signs of life last year, and there's cautious optimism around what could be a more competitive squad. The Warhawks have bolstered their depth and should be tougher in the trenches, but lack of proven playmakers remains a concern.

11. ARKANSAS STATE After a surprising resurgence in 2024, the Red Wolves may be due for a slight step back. Butch Jones's team overachieved last fall, and now faces a tougher schedule with a roster that still has some major depth concerns. It'll be difficult to replicate last year's success without a major leap on offense.

12. TROY Just two years removed from dominating the league, Troy is now in rebuild mode.

KEY CONFERENCE GAMES

Sept. 13	APP ST @ USM
Sept. 27	GASO @ JMU
Sept. 27	ARK ST @ ULM
Oct. 4	USA @ TROY
Oct. 11	ULL @ JMU
Oct. 25	APP ST @ ODU
Oct. 25	GASO @ ARK ST
Nov. 1	JMU @ TX ST
Nov. 1	ARK ST @ TROY
Nov. 8	TX ST @ ULL
Nov. 15	APP ST @ JMU
Nov. 15	CCU @ GASO
Nov. 29	JMU @ CCU
Nov. 29	ULM @ ULL
Nov. 29	USA @ TX ST

2025 RECRUITING RANKINGS

1. (67)	GEORGIA STATE
2. (76)	ARKANSAS STATE
3. (79)	GEORGIA SOUTHERN
4. (81)	LOUISIANA
5. (82)	TROY
6. (93)	COASTAL CAROLINA
7. (100)	TEXAS STATE
8. (102)	OLD DOMINION
9. (103)	APPALACHIAN STATE
10. (106)	SOUTHERN MISS
11. (109)	JAMES MADISON
12. (117)	LOUISIANA-MONROE
13. (118)	SOUTH ALABAMA
14. (120)	MARSHALL

A coaching transition and wave of roster turnover left the Trojans looking like a shell of their former selves. There's still talent on defense, but offensive identity remains a major issue. It may be a year of resetting expectations in Troy.

13. GEORGIA STATE After a hot start, the Panthers struggled to find their footing last season and now enter 2025 with more questions than answers. A lack of offensive punch and a leaky defense puts them near the bottom of the Sun Belt hierarchy heading into the fall.

14. MARSHALL After winning the conference in 2024, Marshall enters the new season in full reset mode. Charles Huff is gone, a mass portal exodus gutted the roster, and it's unclear what this team's identity will be under new head coach Tony Gibson.



APP STATE MOUNTAINEERS

HEAD COACH: Dowell Loggains
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: N/A
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: D. J. Smith

RANK: 111

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-6 (3-5)

DIVISION RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

APPALACHIAN STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2019

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 108th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DL Deshawn
McKnight, WR Makai Jackson,
DL Nate Johnson

KEY ADDITIONS: QB AJ Swann,
WR Davion Dozier, OL Will Flow-
ers, DB Cristian Conyer, DB
Dylan Hasz

OFFENSE: Dowell Loggains takes over play-
calling duties for the Mountaineers this season,
aiming to reverse the offensive decline from
2024 when App State's scoring dropped to just
over 26 points per game.

At quarterback, App State has a pair of exciting
former four-star passers. AJ Swann, who started
12 games at Vanderbilt, is the likely starter
thanks to his experience. However, Iowa State
transfer JJ Kohl remains in the mix and could
factor into the rotation. Kohl was in a position to
start with the Cyclones, but was outshined by
Rocco Becht.

Starting running back Kanye Roberts returns
after missing most of last season with an injury.
The backfield is bolstered by Arkansas transfer
Rashod Dubinion, who appeared in 31 games



Kanye Roberts

Appalachian State Athletics

over three seasons with the Razorbacks.

Dalton Stroman comes off a productive season
and will be joined in the wide receiver room by
several transfers. Jaden Barnes, a 1,000-yard
receiver for Austin Peay in 2024, and Davion
Dozier, a talented Arkansas transfer with three
years of eligibility remaining, add depth and
playmaking ability.

App State's O-line features two returning start-
ers with experience from 2024. The rest of the
projected starters are transfers, including Will
Flowers, who has 19 career starts from his time
in the FCS, and Shamarr Jackson, a key piece
of New Mexico State's offensive line last year.

DEFENSE: The defense was an Achilles' heel
for the Mountaineers throughout 2024. Incoming
defensive coordinator D.J. Smith, who earned
a strong reputation as Missouri's co-defensive
coordinator and linebackers coach, now has a
chance to fix the unit.

The defensive line is talented but lacks desired
experience. Depth was added with transfers
Garrison Butler and Joseph Bakhole, but the
front still has some ground to make up to be
fully competitive.

The linebacker corps returns contributors like
Kyle Anrholt and Thomas Davis. Davis recorded
three sacks last year and helped fuel an under-
rated pass rush.

In the secondary, starting defensive backs
Ethan Johnson and DJ Burks return along with
safety Zyeir Gamble, who made an impact as
a redshirt freshman. App State also added

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 29	Charlotte
Sept. 6	Lindenwood
Sept. 13	@ Southern Miss
Sept. 20	@ Boise State
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	Oregon State
Oct. 11	@ Georgia State
Oct. 18	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 25	@ Old Dominion
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 6	Georgia Southern
Nov. 15	@ James Madison
Nov. 22	Marshall
Nov. 29	Arkansas State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	55/100

Arkansas transfer Dylan Hasz, who played in 24
games with the Razorbacks.

OVERVIEW: The 2024 season marked the end
of a frustrating era for App State, as the pro-
gram slipped from Sun Belt powerhouse status
to a middling Group of Five team.

Hiring Dowell Loggains signals a commitment
to restoring the Mountaineers to their former
heights. Loggains developed LaNorris Sellers
into a potential Heisman contender at South
Carolina and fits well with App State's identity.

While the Mountaineers added several offensive
playmakers and potential starters this offsea-
son, acquiring defensive talent proved more
difficult.

Loggains should maintain the offense's suc-
cess, but the 2025 season likely hinges on how
much improvement D.J. Smith can bring to the
defense.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-4)

ARKANSAS STATE REDWOLVES

HEAD COACH: Butch Jones
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Keith Heckendorf
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Griff McCarley

RANK: 113



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (5-3)

DIVISION RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the
68 Ventures Bowl

ARKANSAS STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2016

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 100th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Dontay
Joyner, RB Zak Wallace, WR
Courtney Jackson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Nana Bur-
ris, OL Will Saxton, DL Simeon
Mitchell, LB Aaron Alexander,
DB Avante Dickerson

OFFENSE: Keith Heckendorf enters his seventh season as Arkansas State's offensive coordinator, aiming to build on a mixed but promising 2024 campaign.

Though former Sun Belt Freshman of the Year Jaylen Raynor didn't quite take the leap expected in his sophomore season, he still delivered solid production and remains capable of breaking out this year.

Returning running back Ja'Quez Cross was a key contributor to the Redwolves' ground game last year, rushing for 638 yards and two touchdowns. Arkansas State also bolstered its backfield with interconference transfer Kenyon Clay, who broke out at Southern Miss in 2024 and still has two seasons of eligibility remaining as he enters 2025 with the Redwolves.



Jaylen Raynor

John Rivera / Getty Images

The biggest offseason win came when All-Sun Belt receiver Corey Rucker, fresh off a 1,000-yard season, decided to return. Sophomore Hunter Summers is poised to take on a larger role and could emerge as the next great receiver for the Redwolves, while incoming FIU transfer Nana Burris is among several new wideouts expected to make an impact.

Noah Smith is the lone returning starter on the offensive line from last year. Southern Miss transfer Wil Saxton adds valuable starting experience, but questions remain about the line's youth and depth. If this O-line can't significantly improve from 2024, it may be another difficult season for this offense.

DEFENSE: Butch Jones elevated linebackers coach Griff McCarley to defensive coordinator this offseason, tasking him with fixing a defense that allowed over 460 yards per game last season.

Arkansas State's defensive line will look very different in 2025, with two impressive FCS transfers joining the interior. Simeon Mitchell, who recorded 41 tackles at McNeese State last year, and Cody Sigler, a six-sack standout from West Alabama, bring experience and production. Returning defensive end Bryan Whitehead, the team's sack leader in 2024, gives the Redwolves a reason for optimism.

Linebacker remains an area of uncertainty, but incoming power conference transfers Wyatt Wright and Aaron Alexander are expected to contribute immediately.

The secondary will feature the return of James

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Southeast Missouri
Sept. 6	@ Arkansas
Sept. 13	Iowa State
Sept. 20	@ Kennesaw State
Sept. 27	@ Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 4	Texas State
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 14	@ South Alabama
Oct. 25	Georgia Southern
Nov. 1	@ Troy
Nov. 8	Southern Miss
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 20	Louisiana
Nov. 29	@ Appalachian State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	54/100

Reed III, who missed most of last year with an injury. Arkansas State also added some key players, including Marshall starting safety AG McGhee and Utah State standout Avante Dickerson.

OVERVIEW: Butch Jones' 2024 Arkansas State team delivered the program's best season since 2019, capped with a bowl victory. Despite the success, the Redwolves still showed major flaws on defense and inconsistency on offense.

Jones has addressed the defensive woes by promoting McCarley and bringing in 13 new defensive transfers. With the return of an All-Conference defensive end and the influx of talent, Arkansas State's defense has a clear path to improvement.

The Redwolves have a lot of positive momentum, but must correct a lot to improve their statistical profile, which suggests they were on the right side of several big breaks in 2024.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (3-5)



C. CAROLINA CHANTICLEERS

HEAD COACH: Tim Beck
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Drew Hollingshead
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeremiah Johnson

RANK: 110

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 6-7 (3-5)

DIVISION RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Myrtle Beach Bowl

COASTAL CAROLINA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2020

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 96th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Noah Kim,
QB Ethan Vasko, DB Matthew
McDoom, DL Clev Lubin

KEY ADDITIONS: QB MJ Morris,
RB Jalen John, WR Malcolm
Gillie, DL Noah Arinze, DB Myles
Mooyoung, DB Dante Thomas

OFFENSE: After a fast start in 2024, Coastal Carolina's offense sputtered late in the season. To spark a turnaround, the Chanticleers hired Western Kentucky offensive coordinator Drew Hollingshead to bring his air-raid system to Conway. Hollingshead found success with the Hilltoppers, turning in the best offense in the C-USA in 2024.

The quarterback room features multiple options with starting experience. MJ Morris, formerly at NC State and Maryland, showed flashes in limited opportunities. Emmett Brown, who started much of 2024 for San Jose State, will also compete for the job.

To bolster a thin backfield, the Chanticleers added UMass transfer Jalen John, who rushed for 538 yards and 10 touchdowns last season.



Cane Berrong

Coastal Carolina Athletics

He'll pair with redshirt sophomore Ja'Vin Simpkins, who brings familiarity with the system.

At receiver, returning top target Jameson Tucker leads the way. Coastal also brought in productive transfers Malcolm Gillie and Colton Hinton, while TE Cane Berrong, who was a key piece in the passing game last year, steps into a starting role.

Up front, Coastal returns All-Sun Belt honorable mention tackle Nick Del Grande and several others with starting experience, giving them a solid foundation along the offensive line. The Chanticleers had a respectable year blocking despite the dysfunction the offense experienced at times in 2024.

DEFENSE: Coastal hired Jeremiah Johnson, who coordinated Conference USA's top defense at Louisiana Tech in 2024, to lead their defensive turnaround. The Chanticleers are hoping for a similar impact in the Sun Belt.

There's potential up front, especially against the run, but several young players and transfers will need to hit. One of the key pieces is New Mexico State transfer Noah Arinze, who was disruptive for the Aggies last fall.

Linebacker is the most stable position group defensively, with veteran Shane Bruce anchoring the unit. This group brings back the most continuity on that side of the ball.

The secondary saw major changes through the portal. Coastal landed former highly-rated JUCO corner Dante Thomas from Kansas State and added former four-star safety DeAndre

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Virginia
Sept. 6	Charleston Southern
Sept. 13	East Carolina
Sept. 20	@ South Alabama
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Old Dominion
Oct. 11	Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 18	@ Appalachian State
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 30	Marshall
Nov. 8	Georgia State
Nov. 15	@ Georgia Southern
Nov. 22	@ South Alabama
Nov. 29	James Madison

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	56/100

Boykins to help elevate the back end.

OVERVIEW: After finishing below .500 for the first time since 2019, Tim Beck enters a pivotal year at Coastal Carolina. To right the ship, he reshaped his staff with two high-impact hires—Hollingshead and Johnson—who both oversaw top C-USA units in 2024. These new hires made great things happen last season, and need to be good fits this year for Coastal Carolina.

Coastal will lean heavily on Beck's first few recruiting classes, which have ranked near the top of the Sun Belt. Portal additions will also need to gel quickly in new schemes on both sides of the football for the Chanticleers to make a leap.

A return to Sun Belt contention will depend on the new coordinators engineering fast turnarounds and the roster meshing under pressure. If there are no signs of legitimate progress, Beck could be in trouble.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (4-4)

GEORGIA SOUTHERN EAGLES

HEAD COACH: Clay Helton
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Aplin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brandon Bailey

RANK: 97



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (6-2)

DIVISION RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the New Orleans Bowl

GEORGIA SOUTHERN AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2014

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 42nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 8 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Dexter Wil-
liams II, RB Jalen White, WR
Derwin Burgess Jr., DB Marc
Stampley II

KEY ADDITIONS: TE River
Helms, WR Dylan Gary, LB Bren-
don Harrington, DL Uche Iloh

OFFENSE: Ryan Aplin did a serviceable job in his first season coordinating the offense, though Georgia Southern did take a step back from its prolific 2023 output. The Eagles will aim to re-establish themselves as one of the Sun Belt's premier offensive units in 2025.

QB JC French IV emerged as a potential star during the 2024 campaign and is set to lead the offense this fall. Behind him, Turner Helton—head coach Clay Helton's son—and former three-star prospect Tyler Budge provide depth and developmental upside.

While the ground game struggled at times last year, the Eagles bring back several solid options. Senior OJ Arnold returns after eclipsing 300 rushing yards in 2024, and David Mbadin-ga is expected to rotate in once again.



JC French IV

Peter Joneleit / AP Photo

At receiver, Georgia Southern boasts impres- sive continuity. Josh Dallas and Marcus Sand- ers Jr. return after productive seasons, while transfers Dylan Gary (1,000+ yards at West Georgia) and Auburn's Camden Brown add fire- power to an already capable WR room.

The offensive line should be a strength, led by All-Sun Belt returnees Caleb Cook and Pichon Wimbley. This veteran group has depth and helped anchor a solid 2024 campaign in the trenches.

DEFENSE: Georgia Southern's defense turned in a strange statistical season in 2024—giving up plenty of yardage, yet finishing in the top half of the Sun Belt in points allowed. Defensive coordinator Brandon Bailey enters his third year hoping to prove that bend-but-don't-break can still get the job done.

The D-line will be a position of strength once again, with Jacob Ferguson and Davion Rhodes returning after combining for four sacks and over 40 tackles. They're joined by standout defensive tackle Latrell Bullard, giving the Eagles proven experience up front and a chance to flip the script on their defensive output.

At linebacker, Georgia Southern loses its top two tacklers but brings back Davon Hicks, who contributed meaningfully in 2024. Former App State LB Brendan Harrington, an All-Sun Belt honorable mention, is expected to step in and provide an immediate impact for the middle of the defense.

Despite finishing last in the Sun Belt in pass defense, the secondary returns All-Conference

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Fresno State
Sept. 6	@ USC
Sept. 13	Jacksonville State
Sept. 20	Maine
Sept. 27	@ James Madison
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	Southern Miss
Oct. 18	Georgia State
Oct. 25	@ Arkansas State
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 6	@ Appalachian State
Nov. 15	Coastal Carolina
Nov. 22	Old Dominion
Nov. 29	@ Marshall

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	59/100

DB Chance Gamble, who was a rare bright spot. The Eagles also added Rutgers transfer Antonio White Jr., a promising young defensive back with upside.

OVERVIEW: Georgia Southern was firmly in the Sun Belt title hunt in 2024 and posted its best season yet under Clay Helton. However, the Eagles remain in search of their first bowl win during his tenure, leaving some unfinished business heading into 2025.

With minimal staff turnover and a strong return- ing core, Georgia Southern boasts continuity in a conference marked by offseason chaos. The roster features veteran leaders on both sides of the ball, though a few areas—most notably the secondary—will need improvement to elevate this team into true championship contention.

The road ahead won't be easy, but the Eagles are well-positioned to remain in the title race once again.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (6-2)



GEORGIA STATE PANTHERS

HEAD COACH: Dell McGee
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Hue Jackson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Travis Pearson

RANK: 115

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 3-9 (1-7)

DIVISION RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

GEORGIA STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 99th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: TE Dorian Fleming,
P James Allen, LB Kevin Swint,
DB Gavin Pringle, DB
Kenyatta Watson

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Javon
Robinson, WR Kyle Washington,
DB Jordan Huff, DB Tyler Scott,
RB Rashad Amos

OFFENSE: Former Cleveland Browns head coach Hue Jackson has transitioned from his role as Georgia State's assistant general manager to take over as offensive coordinator. While Jackson's coaching résumé has its ups and downs, his reputation as a sharp offensive mind is well established.

QB Christian Veilleux flashed serious potential in 2024, delivering strong performances in each of Georgia State's three victories. However, his inconsistency and turnover issues were major factors in the team's losses. For the Panthers to improve in 2025, Veilleux must take better care of the football.

Ole Miss transfer Rashad Amos brings little SEC production, but was a 1,000-yard rusher at Miami (OH) in 2023. If he can return to that form, 150



Ted Hurst

Brett Davis / Imagn Images

he could dramatically improve a ground game that struggled last season.

Georgia State may have one of the best WR rooms in the Group of Five. First-team All-Sun Belt selection Ted Hurst returns alongside DJ Riles and Grambling transfer Javon Robinson, giving the Panthers an explosive and experienced trio.

There's no shortage of talent on the offensive line either. Starting center Alec Johnson returns, and the unit is bolstered by several power conference transfers. Derrell Bailey, who started every game for East Tennessee State in 2024, adds another valuable piece to the front.

DEFENSE: New defensive coordinator Travis Pearson brings a strong pedigree, having served as Troy's DBs coach during its back-to-back Sun Belt title runs. He'll look to elevate a Georgia State defense that showed flashes of promise last season.

The D-line will be anchored by a veteran group, including All-Sun Belt honorable mention Henry Bryant and key returners Ian Mathews and Fuches Lewis II. This experienced unit should be the foundation of Pearson's defense.

At linebacker, Josiah Robinson and sophomore Damaine Wilson could form one of the better duos in the conference. Wilson tallied nearly 40 tackles as a true freshman and is expected to take a big leap forward in 2025.

The secondary was Georgia State's strength in 2024 but has several key departures to replace. Transfers Tyler Scott (Auburn) and Jordan Huff

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Ole Miss
Sept. 6	Memphis
Sept. 13	Murray State
Sept. 20	@ Vanderbilt
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	James Madison
Oct. 11	Appalachian State
Oct. 18	@ Georgia Southern
Oct. 23	South Alabama
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Coastal Carolina
Nov. 15	Marshall
Nov. 22	@ Troy
Nov. 29	@ Old Dominion

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	54/100

(East Carolina) headline a revamped group that will rely on players with limited previous action to step up in bigger roles.

OVERVIEW: Dell McGee started his Georgia State tenure on a high note with a 2-1 start, but a seven-game losing streak quickly derailed the momentum. The disappointing finish didn't overshadow the fact that McGee assembled one of the most talented rosters in program history.

This offseason, he doubled down—bringing in another strong transfer class and making strategic changes to his staff, including the addition of and Pearson and promotion of Jackson.

Georgia State found a few foundational pieces last year that should help provide stability moving forward. While talent alone isn't enough to win in the Sun Belt, if these new hires deliver and the QB play stabilizes, the Panthers could become a legitimate threat in 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (2-6)

JAMES MADISON DUKES

HEAD COACH: Bob Chesney
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dean Kennedy
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Colin Hitschler

RANK: 66



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4 (4-4)

DIVISION RANK: 3rd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Boca Raton Bowl

JAMES MADISON AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 53rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 4 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Tyjai Hopper,
DL Darold DeNgohe, DL Eric
O'Neill, OL Tyshawn Wyatt

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Camden
Coleman, QB Matthew Sluka,
DL Xavier Holmes, DB Curtis
Harris-Lopez, WR Landon Ellis

OFFENSE: James Madison's offense found balance in 2024, finishing as an effective unit both through the air and on the ground. Offensive coordinator Dean Kennedy enters his fourth season on Bob Chesney's staff and will look to take another step forward with this group.

Starting QB Alonza Barnett III is questionable for 2025 as he recovers from a knee injury. In his absence, two potential starters will battle for the job. UNLV transfer Matthew Sluka was an FCS All-American under Chesney at Holy Cross, while Camden Coleman is coming off a breakout season and could push for the role.

George Pettaway returns as the lead back after finishing just 20 yards shy of 1,000 rushing yards in 2024. Senior Ayo Adeyi, who started the first two games last season before suffering



George Pettaway

James Madison Athletics

a season-ending injury, is also back and looking to reclaim his starting job.

The Dukes overhauled their receiving corps with a wave of incoming transfers. Nick DeGennaro and Landon Ellis—both of whom posted 500+ yards at Richmond—join the squad and bring immediate chemistry with their former QB.

All-Sun Belt tackle Pat McMurtrie anchors the offensive line and will be a steadying presence this fall. The Dukes also added several transfers up front, including North Carolina reserve Zach Greenburg, who could slot in at center.

DEFENSE: The headline addition on defense is new coordinator Colin Hitschler, who brings an elite résumé from his stops at Cincinnati, Wisconsin, and Alabama. Hitschler's arrival could help the Dukes sustain—or even elevate—their already strong defensive performance from 2024.

James Madison boasts impact players along the defensive front, including 2024 starter Immanuel Bush and rising star Mychal McMullin. They're joined by Maine transfer Xavier Holmes, who racked up 12.5 tackles for loss and six sacks during an All-Conference season.

Trent Hendrick returns after playing a key role in the Dukes' pass rush last season, while Gannon Weathersby steps into a larger role after contributing as a rotational LB.

In the secondary, JMU brings back several contributors from one of the Sun Belt's top pass defenses. All-Conference safety Jacob Thomas,

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Weber State
Sept. 5	@ Louisville
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ Liberty
Sept. 27	Georgia Southern
Oct. 4	@ Georgia State
Oct. 11	Louisiana
Oct. 18	Old Dominion
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 28	@ Texas State
Nov. 8	@ Marshall
Nov. 15	Appalachian State
Nov. 22	Washington State
Nov. 29	@ Coastal Carolina

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	68/100

starter DJ Barksdale, and rotational standout Chauncey Logan all return. Senior transfers Curtis Harris-Lopez (Holy Cross) and Chantz Harley (Maryland) will bring valuable experience to the back end.

OVERVIEW: Bob Chesney built upon the program's strong foundation in 2024, but James Madison's title hopes unraveled in the final two games of the season.

The offense flashed major potential but was too inconsistent to carry the team down the stretch. However, there are encouraging signs on defense, and the Dukes did well to reload through the portal to offset some key losses.

With a proven ability to attract high-end talent and a roster that's built to compete, James Madison will once again be firmly in the Sun Belt title hunt as they aim to capture the elusive championship that has slipped through their fingers several times recently.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-2)



LOUISIANA RAGIN' CAJUNS

HEAD COACH: Michael Desormeaux
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Leger
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Salgado

RANK: 88

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-4 (7-1)

DIVISION RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the New Mexico Bowl

LOUISIANA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2021

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 114th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Ben Wool-
dridge, WR Lance Legendre, LB
K. C. Ossai, DB Tyrone Lewis Jr.,
OL Landon Burton

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Walker
Howard, WR Shelton Sampson
Jr., DB Curley Reed III, DB Trae
Tomlinson

OFFENSE: Tim Leger enters his third season as Louisiana's offensive coordinator and seventh overall on staff. Under his guidance, the Ragin' Cajuns have fielded one of the Sun Belt's top offenses in back-to-back seasons and are positioned for continued success in 2025.

With the graduation of first team All-Sun Belt QB Ben Wooldridge, Louisiana turns to former four-star transfer Walker Howard. After stints at LSU and Ole Miss where he struggled to find a starting role, Howard now brings high upside and multiple years of eligibility to Lafayette.

The ground game will be in good shape with the return of the team's top two rushers from 2024. Bill Davis and Zylan Perry form a strong one-two punch, with Perry carrying All-Conference potential if he can stay healthy this year.



Zylan Perry

Brad Kemp / The Advocate

Louisiana's WR room will be a work in progress after losing most of its top targets from a year ago. Senior Robert Williams, who saw rotational action in 2024, will be counted on to step up. He'll be joined by incoming LSU transfer Shelton Sampson Jr., a talented prospect with a high ceiling.

The Ragin' Cajuns have built a reputation for strong O-line play, and that should continue in 2025 despite the loss of multiple All-Sun Belt performers. Veteran tackle Jax Harrington and several experienced depth pieces return to anchor the unit.

DEFENSE: Louisiana made a leap defensively in 2024, emerging as one of the best units in the conference. Much of that credit goes to defensive coordinator Jim Salgado, who returns for his second season and has helped elevate the group's identity.

The defensive line is stacked with returning talent, including Jordan Lawson, who notched six sacks last season. He leads a disruptive unit that also features multiple experienced interior linemen capable of controlling the trenches.

At linebacker, Cameron Whitfield and Jaden Dugger return as key contributors to a fierce front seven. Whitfield was one of the Sun Belt's most dangerous pass rushers in 2024, and this LB corps will remain the heart of the defense.

The secondary should be another strength, led by All-Sun Belt senior Tyree Skipper. The Ragin' Cajuns also add Richmond transfer Trae Tomlinson, who started every game last year. With solid depth throughout the defensive

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Rice
Sept. 6	McNeese
Sept. 13	@ Missouri
Sept. 20	@ Eastern Michigan
Sept. 27	Marshall
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ James Madison
Oct. 18	Southern Miss
Oct. 25	@ Troy
Nov. 1	@ South Alabama
Nov. 8	Texas State
Nov. 15	BYE
Nov. 20	@ Arkansas State
Nov. 29	Louisiana-Monroe

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	62/100

backfield, this unit has the tools to repeat last year's success.

OVERVIEW: Louisiana has quietly orchestrated a strong turnaround under head coach Michael Desormeaux, transforming into a Sun Belt contender after a pair of transitional seasons.

Though the Ragin' Cajuns fell just short of claiming their fifth conference title in 2024, they return both coordinators and benefit from coaching continuity. That stability, paired with a fantastic defense, gives them a strong foundation entering 2025.

For Louisiana to make another title push, Walker Howard must emerge as a steady presence at QB, and a new-look receiving corps will need to step up. But with a dominant defense and proven leadership on both sides of the ball, the Ragin' Cajuns are poised to be right back in the Sun Belt title mix this fall, and stay in the conversation for the foreseeable future.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (6-2)

MARSHALL THUNDERING HERD

HEAD COACH: Tony Gibson
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rod Smith
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shannon Morrison

RANK: 125



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 10-3 (7-1)

DIVISION RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

MARSHALL AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 130th

RETURNING STARTERS: 2
offensive, 1 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Cole Pennington, RB A. J. Turner, QB Braylon Braxton, DB Guylijah Theodule, WR Tychaun Chapman

KEY ADDITIONS: OL Tyler McDuffie, QB Zion Turner, RB Michael Allen, DL Paul Hutson III, LB Jibreel Al-Amin

OFFENSE: Marshall will have a nearly complete overhaul on offense in 2025, starting with new offensive coordinator Rod Smith. Smith comes over from Jacksonville State, where he helped guide the Gamecocks to a Conference USA title in 2024.

The Thundering Herd will have multiple veteran options at QB. Junior Zion Turner, once the breakout star of UConn's 2022 bowl run, struggled to find snaps at Jacksonville State but now gets a fresh opportunity. He'll compete with Syracuse transfer Carlos Del Rio-Wilson, a former three-star prospect, for the starting role.

In the backfield, Marshall adds a pair of transfers in UNLV's Michael Carter—who began his career at NC State—and Jo'Shon Barbie, who led McNeese in rushing last year. Both backs



Toby Payne

Bill Cornwill / WV Metro News

bring intrigue but remain largely unproven at the FBS level.

Outside of returning TE Toby Payne, the pass-catching group is almost entirely new. The Thundering Herd added several transfers to bolster the room, but there's limited proven production. One familiar face is senior Demarcus Lacey, who played under Rod Smith at Jacksonville State.

Up front, Marshall returns just one starter in guard Jalen Slappy. Hampton transfer Tyler McDuffie and several players who primarily contributed on special teams in 2024 will be thrust into major roles this fall. It's a complete rebuild for a once-stable offensive line.

DEFENSE: Marshall brought back a familiar name in Shannon Morrison, who takes over as defensive coordinator after previously coaching LBs for the Herd. He inherits a defense facing major turnover across the board.

There's some continuity up front with returning defensive ends Braydin Ward and Jacarius Clayton, both of whom saw rotational snaps last season. Beyond that, this unit has been rebuilt, including the addition of Campbell standout Paul Hutson III.

Jacksonville State's Jibreel Al-Amin and Mississippi State transfer Javae Gilmore headline a group that could help stabilize the defense and potentially be the team's most productive unit.

In the secondary, starting safety Jadarius Green-McKnight provides rare returning experience. Tennessee State nickel Boogie Trotter

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Georgia
Sept. 6	Missouri State
Sept. 13	Eastern Kentucky
Sept. 20	@ Middle Tennessee
Sept. 27	@ Louisiana
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	Old Dominion
Oct. 18	Texas State
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 30	@ Coastal Carolina
Nov. 8	James Madison
Nov. 15	@ Georgia State
Nov. 22	@ Appalachian State
Nov. 29	Georgia Southern

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	8/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	4/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	48/100

and Middle Tennessee corner Marvae Myers-Glover arrive with starting experience and will be asked to play major roles immediately.

OVERVIEW: Just months after winning their first Sun Belt title, Marshall was turned on its head. Head coach Charles Huff departed following a conflict with administration, taking a large portion of the roster with him.

Enter Tony Gibson, the former NC State defensive coordinator, who takes on his first FBS head coaching job amid the rubble. With over 50 transfer additions, Marshall essentially rebuilt its roster from scratch this offseason.

The 2025 campaign will be an uphill climb for the Thundering Herd, who are looking less to repeat as champions and more to see signs of stability under Gibson. How quickly this massive roster experiment comes together will determine whether Marshall can stay competitive in a loaded Sun Belt.

RECORD PREDICTION: 4-8 (2-6)



OLD DOMINION MONARCHS

HEAD COACH: Ricky Rahne
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kevin Decker
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Seiler

RANK: 90

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (4-4)

DIVISION RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

OLD DOMINION AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2012

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 66th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: TE Pat Conroy,
WR Isaiah Paige, DB Jahron
Manning, RB Aaron Young

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Ja'Cory
Thomas, OL Ryan Joyce, DB
Botros Alisandro, DB Lucas
Struck, DB Nickendre Stiger

OFFENSE: Old Dominion made a big leap offensively in 2024, surpassing 400 yards per game and showcasing the progress under offensive coordinator Kevin Decker. Now entering his third year, Decker will look to build on the unit's upward momentum.

Freshman QB Colton Joseph burst onto the scene last year with multiple 300-yard passing performances and proved to be a true dual threat. He totaled 22 touchdowns across just seven starts and returns with plenty of upside.

The Monarchs led the Sun Belt in rushing last season, averaging a blistering 209 yards per game. That ground game returns key contributors in redshirt sophomore Devin Roche and senior Bryce Duke, both of whom topped 200 yards on the season.



Jason Henderson

Old Dominion Athletics

The receiving corps lacked consistency in 2024 and will undergo a near-total overhaul. JUCO standouts Ja'Cory Thomas and Tre Brown arrive from Hutchinson CC with high expectations, and tight end Jalen Butler could emerge as a key piece in the passing game after showing flashes last year in a tight end-friendly scheme.

Up front, Old Dominion brings back three productive starters, including All-Sun Belt tackle Zach Barlev. Fordham transfer Ryan Joyce—who started 12 games and helped power an offense that averaged 428 yards per game—will bolster a line that should remain one of the team's strengths.

DEFENSE: Defensive coordinator Blake Seiler returns for his sixth season and has been with head coach Ricky Rahne throughout his entire tenure. Seiler's system has quietly produced solid results and is a foundation piece for the program.

Defensive end Kris Trinidad earned All-Sun Belt honors in 2024 with five sacks and will be the anchor of the front line. Sophomore DeAndre Lynch is set to control the middle, while Ricardo Williams Jr. steps into a bigger role at DE.

Old Dominion features one of the best linebacker groups in the Group of Five. Former All-American Jason Henderson returns to full health, pairing once again with All-Conference talent Koa Naotala. Add in Mario Thompson and Jahleel Culbreath, and this LB corps has elite production, depth, and leadership.

The secondary, however, will need to improve after giving up nearly 250 passing yards per

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	@ Indiana
Sept. 6	NC Central
Sept. 13	@ Virginia Tech
Sept. 20	BYE
Sept. 27	Liberty
Oct. 4	Coastal Carolina
Oct. 11	@ Marshall
Oct. 18	@ James Madison
Oct. 25	Appalachian State
Nov. 1	@ Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 13	Troy
Nov. 22	@ Georgia Southern
Nov. 29	Georgia State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	8/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	59/100

game last year. Safety Mario Easterly is the lone returning starter, while Kansas State transfer Nickendre Stiger and Purdue's Botros Alisandro arrive with valuable Power Four experience.

OVERVIEW: Old Dominion endured a brutal schedule in 2024 and narrowly missed bowl eligibility. While that outcome stung, there's no denying the strides the program has made under Ricky Rahne, who inherited a major rebuild. Still, as he enters year six, the absence of a winning season looms large.

This roster has had the talent to compete for a while now, but difficult non-conference slates and a deep Sun Belt have kept the Monarchs just short of a breakthrough.

With a returning QB, a dangerous ground game, continuity at coordinator, and arguably the best linebacker unit in the conference, 2025 feels like the best shot yet for Old Dominion to post its first winning season since 2016.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (5-3)

S. ALABAMA JAGUARS

HEAD COACH: Major Applewhite
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Petrino
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Will Windham, Jason Washington

RANK: 98



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 7-6 (5-3)

DIVISION RANK: 4th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Salute to Veterans Bowl

SOUTH ALABAMA AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 68th

RETURNING STARTERS: 3
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Gio Lopez,
DB Jordan Scruggs, OL Jayden
Hobson, OL Malachi Carney, TE
Will Loerzel

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Brendan
Jenkins, OL Amaury Wiggins,
TE Miller McCrumby, QB Zach
Pyron, DL Tre'Mon Henry

OFFENSE: In an effort to replicate last season's offensive success, Major Applewhite promoted WR coach Paul Petrino to offensive play-caller for 2025.

However, the Jaguars were dealt a major blow when rising star QB Gio Lopez departed during the spring transfer window. Fortunately, they rebounded quickly by landing Zach Pyron, a promising transfer from Georgia Tech who flashed upside in limited action last season.

The run game remains in good shape with the return of Kentrel Bullock, who rushed for over 800 yards at more than five yards per carry in 2024. South Alabama finished top four in the Sun Belt on the ground last year.

The passing game brings back solid contribu-



Devin Voisin

South Alabama Athletics

tors in rotational WRs Devin Voisin and Anthony Eager. They'll be joined by Samford transfer Brendan Jenkins, who racked up nearly 900 receiving yards over the past two seasons and gives the group a much-needed boost.

Up front, the offensive line should continue to be a strength. Despite some big losses via the portal, Center Malachi Preciado and Arkansas transfer Amaury Wiggins adds size and experience to a unit that helped drive last year's offensive success.

DEFENSE: The Jaguars fielded a bend-but-don't-break defense in 2024, finishing fifth in the Sun Belt in points allowed. Defensive coordinator Will Windham returns for his second season and will aim to build on the defense's strong finish.

Continuity up front gives South Alabama a solid foundation. Rising sophomore Tyler Thomas and veteran tackle Ed Smith IV made key contributions last season and will be impact players again in 2025. Southern Miss transfer Tre'Mon Henry adds further depth and proven pass-rush ability.

Both starting linebackers are back this season after combining for 173 tackles in 2024. Blayne Myrick earned All-Sun Belt honors as a sophomore and enters his junior season as a defensive leader.

The secondary is more of a concern after surrendering nearly 250 passing yards per game and returning just one starter in Wesley Miller. South Alabama turned to the portal to address this, landing Arkansas transfer Dallas Young

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Morgan State
Sept. 6	Tulane
Sept. 13	@ Auburn
Sept. 20	Coastal Carolina
Sept. 27	@ North Texas
Oct. 4	@ Troy
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 14	Arkansas State
Oct. 23	@ Georgia State
Nov. 1	Louisiana
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	@ Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 22	Southern Miss
Nov. 29	@ Texas State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	4/10
COACHING:	5/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	58/100

and former East Tennessee State starter Jayvon Henderson to help stabilize the unit.

OVERVIEW: South Alabama learned the tough side of Group of Five success this offseason. After a productive 2024 campaign, their offense was gutted by the transfer portal, and OC Rob Ezell was hired away—delivering a harsh welcome to the current era of college football for second-year head coach Major Applewhite.

While the Jaguars reloaded with several new faces, the offensive certainty they lost will be difficult to replicate. With so many unknowns on that side of the ball, South Alabama's defensive improvement will be crucial to staying competitive.

This team can't afford to look back. If the Jaguars are to return to a bowl game, they'll need quick development from their new offensive core and breakout performances from all three phases.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (4-4)



SOUTHERN MISS EAGLES

HEAD COACH: Charles Huff
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Blake Anderson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jason Semore

RANK: 99

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 1-11 (0-8)

DIVISION RANK: 7th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

SOUTHERN MISS AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2011

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 73rd

RETURNING STARTERS: 1
offensive, 3 defensive

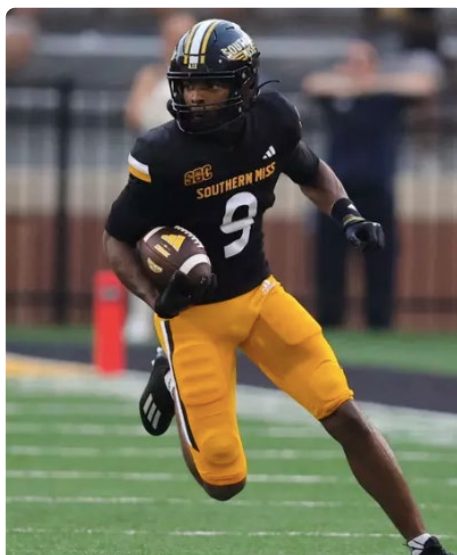
KEY LOSSES: DB Micheal Car-
away Jr., DL Tre'Mon Henry, WR
Tiaquelin Mims

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Braylon
Braxton, RB Robert Briggs,
OL Cooper Frazier, LB Michael
Montgomery, DB Josh Battle

OFFENSE: Charles Huff made a strong hire in bringing on Blake Anderson as offensive coordinator. Anderson was set for his fourth year as head coach at Utah State before being let go ahead of the 2024 season for non-football reasons.

Leading the charge will be Marshall transfer and All-Sun Belt QB Braylon Braxton, a dynamic playmaker who threw 19 touchdowns to just two interceptions in 2024. He gives the Eagles immediate credibility and leadership at QB.

The backfield will have an entirely new look composed solely of transfer additions. Utah State's Robert Briggs and Ole Miss transfer Matt Jones will likely compete for the starting role, bringing speed and Power Five experience to the RB room.



Larry Simmons

Joe Harper / bgnphoto.com

Southern Miss also reloaded at wide receiver by raiding the Marshall portal pipeline, landing four pass catchers who each logged at least 15 receptions last year. Chuck Montgomery and Carl Chester headline the group and bring chemistry from their previous stop.

Up front, the Eagles rebuilt the O-line with several FCS standouts. Christian Anderson was a multi-year starter at Alabama A&M, Cooper Frazier contributed at East Tennessee State, and Hayes Creel anchored the line at McNeese. Despite the wholesale changes, this unit may have a higher floor than expected.

DEFENSE: Southern Miss also handed its defense to a familiar face, hiring former Marshall defensive coordinator Jason Semore. He inherits a defense with major turnover—but also several familiar pieces from his Sun Belt title-winning unit.

Up front, Brodarius and Jameer Lewis are among the few returning producers after combining for six sacks in 2024. They'll be joined by Marshall transfer Isaiah Gibson, who will look to make an impact on the interior. Improvement is badly needed after the Eagles finished last in the Sun Belt in rushing defense a season ago.

LB Chris Jones returns after a breakout true freshman campaign, and the new staff wisely retained him through the transition. He'll be joined by Portland State's leading tackler Michael Montgomery, who brings high-level FCS experience.

The secondary underwent a full renovation, making last year's poor pass defense largely

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Mississippi State
Sept. 6	Jackson State
Sept. 13	Appalachian State
Sept. 20	@ Louisiana Tech
Sept. 27	Jacksonville State
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 9	@ Georgia Southern
Oct. 18	@ Louisiana
Oct. 25	Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 1	BYE
Nov. 8	@ Arkansas State
Nov. 15	Texas State
Nov. 22	@ South Alabama
Nov. 29	Troy

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	12/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	8/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	58/100

irrelevant. The new look group will be headlined by Chattanooga All-Southern Conference DB Josh Battle and Marshall transfer corner Josh Moten, giving the secondary a solid foundation.

OVERVIEW: Southern Miss hit rock bottom in 2024, finishing 1-11 and going winless in conference play for the first time since the disastrous 2012 season. But the program responded by landing Sun Belt championship coach Charles Huff from Marshall.

Huff brought more than just his résumé. He arrives with much of his Marshall defensive staff and a staggering 52 transfers, including 21 players from Marshall's title-winning roster.

There's real optimism in Hattiesburg that the Eagles could go from worst to first in one season. While that leap will be tough, this overhauled squad has the talent to contend for a bowl bid—and could be one of 2025's biggest turnaround stories.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (3-5)

TEXAS STATE BOBCATS

HEAD COACH: G. J. Kinne
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Landon Keopple
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dexter McCoil, Bradley Dale Peveto

RANK: 85



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (5-3)

DIVISION RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the First Responder Bowl

TEXAS STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2005

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 115th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 5 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Jordan McCloud, RB Ismail Mahdi, WR Joey Hobert, DL Tavion Coleman, DL Ben Bell

KEY ADDITIONS: QB Gevani McCoy, DL Michael Nwokocha, LB Ayden Jones, WR Tyrin Smith, DB Khamari Terrell

OFFENSE: The departure of offensive coordinator Mack Leftwich to a Power Four program speaks volumes about the explosive success Texas State has had under G.J. Kinne. To keep the momentum going, Kinne promoted Landon Keopple from within—another internal hire in a program that's made a habit of sustaining its offensive identity.

Finding QBs in the portal hasn't been an issue for the Bobcats, and this year is no different. Among the additions is former Jerry Rice Award winner Gevani McCoy, who showed flashes at Oregon State last season after an award-winning FCS debut in 2022. He'll compete with other Power Four transfers in a talented QB room.

Lincoln Pare often looked like the Bobcats' top option in a loaded backfield last year, and he



Lincoln Pare

Jakob Rodriguez / Texas Football

returns alongside Torrance Burgess Jr., who averaged over six yards per carry. With that one-two punch, Texas State should again find success on the ground.

At receiver, the Bobcats return 400-yard WR Chris Dawn Jr. and versatile contributor Beau Sparks, while adding Power Four transfers Tyrin Smith and Mavin Anderson to a group that consistently fuels their high-flying attack.

The offensive line was a key part of the Bobcats finishing top five nationally in total offense last season. Two starters return from that group, including veteran guard Tellek Lockette, who's been a mainstay over the past two seasons.

DEFENSE: Texas State's defense made a major leap in 2024, and a big reason why was the promotion of safeties coach Dexter McCoil to defensive coordinator. His leadership helped transform the defense from a liability into a solid, complementary unit.

Edge rushers Kalil Alexander and Jo'Laison Landry combined for 11 sacks last year and return to anchor the front seven. They'll be joined by Syracuse transfer Michael Nwokocha, who brings size and depth to the interior.

The linebacker corps has been bolstered by an intriguing mix of talent. Ayden Jones, a standout at Prairie View A&M, should push for immediate playing time, while Texas transfers Terrence Cooks and Chantz Johnson give the Bobcats proven experience.

In the secondary, Texas State brings back its starting safety duo in Ryan Nolan and Darius

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Eastern Michigan
Sept. 6	@ UTSA
Sept. 13	@ Arizona State
Sept. 20	Nicholls
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	@ Arkansas State
Oct. 11	Troy
Oct. 18	@ Marshall
Oct. 25	BYE
Oct. 28	James Madison
Nov. 8	@ Louisiana
Nov. 15	@ Southern Miss
Nov. 22	Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 29	South Alabama

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	62/100

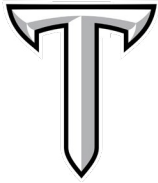
Jackson—two leaders who were key to the unit's improvement. The corner spots remain a question, but the Bobcats are banking on portal additions to fill the gaps.

OVERVIEW: Texas State has evolved from lovable underdogs into true contenders in the Sun Belt title race. After coming within one game of a division crown in 2024, the Bobcats return with high expectations despite losing four All-Conference players and their offensive coordinator.

G.J. Kinne responded by reloading at the skill positions and promoting from within—an approach that continues to pay off. With one of the league's most dynamic offenses and a defense on the rise, Texas State is primed for another run.

A tough stretch in November looms large, but if the Bobcats can close strong, they have a real shot at delivering a special season.

RECORD PREDICTION: 8-4 (6-2)



TROY TROJANS

HEAD COACH: Gerad Parker
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sean Reagan
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dontae Wright, Nathan Burton

RANK: 114

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 4-8 (3-5)

DIVISION RANK: 6th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

TROY AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2023

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 19th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Boaz Stanley,
OL Daniel King, DB LJ Green, DL
Phillip Lee, RB Damien Taylor,
WR Devonte Ross

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Dariyonne
Bryant, WR Kristian Tate, OL
Vysen Lang, DL Elijah Davis, DB
Kaleno Levine

OFFENSE: Sean Reagan's return to Troy last season as offensive coordinator was a mixed bag but ultimately laid a strong foundation for the future. Despite some inconsistency, the Trojans found ways to get the ball into their playmakers' hands and showed flashes of promise.

Senior leader Goose Crowder returns after missing most of last season due to injury. In just two full starts, Crowder impressed with 491 passing yards, five touchdowns, and zero interceptions, showing the potential to be a dynamic force under center.

At running back, Troy must reset after losing their 1,000-yard rusher to the transfer portal. Redshirt sophomore Jordan Lovett looks poised to take on a bigger role in a backfield that struggled overall last year despite strong performances from its top runners.



Goose Crowder

Troy University Athletics

The biggest splash on offense this offseason was landing JUCO No. 1 WR Dariyonne Bryant, who will join returning contributor Peyton Higgins and playmaking tight end Ethan Conner to form a promising receiving corps.

Though the offensive line lost a few starters, Troy returns three linemen who started the final stretch of the season. Matt Henry started the last six games without allowing a sack, and the addition of Tennessee transfer center Vysen Lang, who has three years of eligibility remaining, should bolster the unit further.

Defensive tackles Luis Medina and Julian Peterson return to anchor the run defense, complemented by new additions like former JUCO No. 1 edge rusher Elijah Davis from South Carolina, who will add pass-rush depth.

DEFENSE: Dontae Wright guided a solid defensive effort under challenging circumstances in his first season as coordinator. This year's true test comes with limited returning playmakers from Troy's dominant 2023 Sun Belt title defense.

Linebacker depth looks strong with seniors Jordan Stringer, Jah-Mal Williams, and Steven Cattledge leading a unit that boasts plenty of experience and talent on paper.

Troy's pass defense regressed in 2024 but retains decent continuity, led by safety Justin Powe, who notched two interceptions last season, and Devin Lafayette, a stalwart in run

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Nicholls
Sept. 6	@ Clemson
Sept. 13	Memphis
Sept. 20	@ Buffalo
Sept. 27	BYE
Oct. 4	South Alabama
Oct. 11	@ Texas State
Oct. 18	@ Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 25	Louisiana
Nov. 1	Arkansas State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 13	@ Old Dominion
Nov. 22	Georgia State
Nov. 29	@ Southern Miss

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	9/15
RUNNINGBACK:	4/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	6/10
SECONDARY:	5/10
COACHING:	4/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	55/100

support out of the SPEAR position. The Trojans are hopeful transfer portal additions like Missouri State DB Kaleno Levine, who recorded 50 tackles last year, will help elevate the secondary as a whole.

OVERVIEW: Gerad Parker's first season as head coach featured bright spots but ultimately fell short of expectations given the talent he inherited.

This offseason, Troy lost key playmakers to the transfer portal, including their top receiver, leading rusher, and several starting linemen to bigger programs. Defensively, however, the Trojans return a surprising number of contributors capable of delivering another solid campaign.

While the Trojans may lack the same offensive firepower, they have the defensive foundation to push for an improved record if everything comes together.

RECORD PREDICTION: 3-9 (2-6)

UL MONROE WARHAWKS

HEAD COACH: Bryant Vincent
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: N/A
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Earnest Hill

RANK: 112



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (3-5)

DIVISION RANK: 5th

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

LOUISIANA MONROE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Sun Belt

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2005

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 24th

RETURNING STARTERS: 7
offensive, 7 defensive

KEY LOSSES: RB Ahmad Hardy,
OL Carter Miller, OL Devon
Smith, RB James Jones, DB
Wydettt Williams Jr.

KEY ADDITIONS: RB D'Shaun
Ford, LB Fred Clark, QB Bryson
Kimbrough, OL AJ Vinson

OFFENSE: The Warhawks offense showed improvement across the board in 2024, but still have significant work ahead. Last season, only Iowa, Michigan, and the service academies had weaker passing attacks than Louisiana-Monroe did.

Sophomore Aidan Armenta stepped up last year and will likely be tasked with revitalizing the passing game in 2025. While he still has room to grow, Armenta showed promise with solid performances against Southern Miss and Marshall.

Louisiana-Monroe's offense also unlocked a star in Ahmad Hardy last season, but this year the Warhawks expect similar production from junior RB Bennett Galloway and senior Ozarrio Smith in the same system.



Aidan Armenta

ULM Athletics

Three of ULM's top four receivers return, providing some much-needed continuity. Tyler Griffin stands out as a potential breakout player, having averaged an explosive 24 yards per catch last season. Having TE Nate Sullivan Jr. back will be a luxury for Armenta, as Sullivan had over 100 receiving yards in 2024.

The Warhawks' offensive line was a bright spot in 2024, allowing just 21 sacks and powering an impressive running game despite being somewhat one-dimensional. All-Sun Belt honorable mention Elijah Fisher leads a group of returning starters poised to maintain last season's success.

DEFENSE: Earnest Hill transformed Louisiana-Monroe's defense from cellar-dwellers to a top-half conference unit in yards allowed per game. The Warhawks improved their pass defense by nearly 100 yards per game last year.

Defensive end Kevontay Wells earned second-team All-Sun Belt honors after racking up 50 tackles and three sacks in 2024, and his presence anchors a deep defensive line that boasts two-deep talent at every position.

At linebacker, seniors Carl Glass Jr. and Tyrese Hopkins return, providing experience and stability to a unit expected to sustain a stout run defense.

While ULM will miss All-Conference DB and leading tackler Wydettt Williams Jr., the secondary remains strong with key contributors back. David Godsey Jr. earned All-Sun Belt honorable mention, and Korian Wilson returns at corner after an excellent junior campaign. Together

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 28	Saint Francis
Sept. 6	@ Alabama
Sept. 13	BYE
Sept. 20	@ UTEP
Sept. 27	Arkansas State
Oct. 4	@ Northwestern
Oct. 11	@ Coastal Carolina
Oct. 18	Troy
Oct. 25	@ Southern Miss
Nov. 1	Old Dominion
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	South Alabama
Nov. 22	@ Texas State
Nov. 29	@ Louisiana

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	7/15
RUNNINGBACK:	5/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	4/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	55/100

with rising safety Lynard Harris, the Warhawks possess the pieces to stifle Sun Belt passing attacks once again.

OVERVIEW: Louisiana-Monroe stands as a prime example of how quickly a struggling program can turn around with the right coaching staff. After being passed over for the UAB head coaching job in 2023, Bryant Vincent responded by engineering a major turnaround, highlighted by a 26-point blowout over the very team that snubbed him.

As expected, some top players were lost to the transfer portal this offseason, but the defense remains largely intact heading into 2025. If the Warhawks can find consistent success through the air, it will open up their running game and significantly raise their ceiling.

This program has a legitimate shot at its first bowl appearance since 2012—and that might even be setting the bar too low.

RECORD PREDICTION: 6-6 (3-5)



OREGON STATE BEAVERS

HEAD COACH: Trent Bray
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Ryan Gunderson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rod Chance

RANK: 49

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 5-7 (1-0)

CONFERENCE RANK: 1st

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: N/A

OREGON STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Pac-12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2024

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 39th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: OL Joshua Gray,
RB Jam Griffin, DB Noble Thom-
as, TE Jermaine Terry II, QB
Gevani McCoy

KEY ADDITIONS: LB Raesjon
Davis, CB TJ Crandall, OL JT
Hand, QB Maalik Murphy, CB
Jalil Tucker, TE Riley Williams

OFFENSE: Oregon State invested heavily on offense this offseason to erase much of the volatility that plagued them in 2024.

The Beavers landed Duke transfer Maalik Murphy, who had shown early portal interest last season and now takes over as the new starting quarterback. Backing him up is former four-star recruit Gabbari Johnson, who saw situational action in 2024 and offers an exciting complement.

In the backfield, Anthony Hankerson returns off a productive 1,000-yard rushing season, now aided by the addition of Louisiana Tech's Marquis Crosby.

WR Darrius Clemons carries big expectations after a breakout finale last season, while reliable target Trent Walker returns following a 900-yard 160



Anthony Hankerson

Craig Strobeck / Imagn Images

campaign. As is customary for Oregon State, the tight end group remains deep and talented with the addition of Riley Williams (Miami) and Jackson Bowers (BYU).

On the O-line, Van Wells is the lone returning starter, but Oregon State has a strong track record of developing players upfront. Injuries sidelined promising contributors Tyler Voltin and Tyler Morano last season, but both are poised to factor heavily this year. Nevada transfer Josiah Timoteo also adds flexibility and depth to the line.

DEFENSE: Trent Bray takes over playcalling duties on defense, inheriting a group with solid building blocks for 2025.

The defensive front features experience in Jacob Schuster and Thomas Collins, who aim to improve Oregon State's run defense. Olu Omotosho looks to carve out a larger role in the pass rush after limited playing time last year.

Linebacker is a promising position group with USC transfer Raesjon Davis joining impact players Nikko Taylor and breakout freshman Dexter Foster.

The secondary, however, stands out as the unit's true strength. Safety Skyler Thomas is the team's best defensive player, while cornerbacks Kobe Singleton, returning from injury, and Exodus Ayers, fresh off a strong true freshman season, anchor the group. There is also significant buzz around former Oregon DB Jalil Tucker, who could compete for a starting job.

OVERVIEW: The tone of Oregon State's offsea-

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	California
Sept. 6	Fresno State
Sept. 13	@ Texas Tech
Sept. 20	@ Oregon
Sept. 26	Houston
Oct. 4	@ App. State
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	Lafayette
Oct. 25	Wake Forest
Nov. 1	Washington State
Nov. 8	Sam Houston
Nov. 15	@ Tulsa
Nov. 22	BYE
Nov. 29	@ Washington State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	8/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	7/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	11/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	7/10
SECONDARY:	8/10
COACHING:	6/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	70/100

son is far more optimistic than the frustrations of 2024. Instead of bracing for a portal exodus, the Beavers focused on stacking talent and building depth.

With a confident new QB and a defense loaded with playmakers who missed time last season due to injuries, Oregon State looks better equipped to withstand the rigors of their challenging schedule. The Beavers lost the battle of attrition in 2024, resulting in several baffling mid-season losses, but 2025 promises a more prepared team with improved depth to navigate their pseudo-power conference slate.

Oregon State faces four of its five Power Four opponents before October, so early results will quickly reveal where they stand nationally.

As they prepare for life in a revamped Pac-12 conference in 2026, the Trent Bray era resets with renewed optimism and a fresh sense of possibility for the 2025 season.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3 (2-0)

WASHINGTON STATE COUGARS

HEAD COACH: Jimmy Rogers
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Danny Freund
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jesse Bobbit

RANK: 82



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 8-5 (0-1)

CONFERENCE RANK: 2nd

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost
the Holiday Bowl

WASHINGTON STATE AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: Pac-12

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2002

**RETURNING PRODUCTION
RANK:** 134th

RETURNING STARTERS: 4
offensive, 2 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB John Mateer,
WR Kris Hutson, S Adrian Wil-
son, CB Kapena Gushiken, WR
Kyle Williams

KEY ADDITIONS: CB Tucker
Large, WR Devin Ellison, RB
Angel Johnson, OL AJ Vaipulu

OFFENSE: After nearly two decades of a high-flying spread and Air Raid attack, Washington State enters a new era under Jimmy Rogers with a more balanced offensive approach.

A major boost to this offense is the return of quarterback Zevi Eckhaus, who spent less than two days in the transfer portal before withdrawing and recommitting to Washington State. Eckhaus is by far the most experienced passer on the roster, boasting 79 career touchdown passes over three seasons at Bryant and one at Washington State.

In the backfield, a trio of running backs — Angel Johnson, Kirby Vorhees, and Maxwell Woods — all followed Rogers from South Dakota State. Together they combined for over 1,200



Zevi Eckhaus

Denis Poroy / The Associated Press

yards and 12 touchdowns in 2024 and will be key pieces in Rogers' vision of a balanced attack.

At WR, Josh Meredith returns as the most experienced pass catcher, being the only returning receiver with more than 10 receptions last season. A big offseason addition came in the form of Devin Ellison, ranked as the No. 6 JUCO receiver in this class. Their experience will be invaluable to a receiving corps that lacks depth.

Washington State returns just two starters on the offensive line: Christian Hilborn and Brock Dieu. Their versatility to play multiple positions will be critical as the unit gels and fills in the gaps.

DEFENSE: The Cougars' defense took the hardest hit this offseason, losing several household names like Kyle Thornton, Al-Uqdak, and Kapena Gushiken. To replace these impact players, Washington State went deep into the transfer portal, and five projected defensive starters are incoming transfers.

The defensive line is anchored by another former Jackrabbit in Max Baloun, alongside a mix of juniors and seniors hoping to make a big impact, including senior Raam Stevenson.

The linebacker corps will rely on upperclassmen who contributed last season, with Keith Brown and Parker McKenna stepping into full-time starting roles.

Virtually the entire secondary comes from South Dakota State as well, with Tucker Large, Matthew Durrance, and Colby Humphrey expected

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Idaho
Sept. 6	San Diego State
Sept. 13	@ North Texas
Sept. 20	Washington
Sept. 27	@ Colorado State
Oct. 4	BYE
Oct. 11	@ Ole Miss
Oct. 18	@ Virginia
Oct. 25	Toledo
Nov. 1	@ Oregon State
Nov. 8	BYE
Nov. 15	Louisiana Tech
Nov. 22	@ James Madison
Nov. 29	Oregon State

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	10/15
RUNNINGBACK:	7/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	5/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	7/10
COACHING:	7/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	3/5
OVERALL:	63/100

to start. This group was part of a dominant Jackrabbits secondary in 2024 that allowed fewer than 200 passing yards per game.

OVERVIEW: Washington State is navigating a transformative offseason similar to the one faced by many Pac-12 programs in 2023. With a new staff, scheme, and roster, the Cougars are embracing this fresh start.

While Jimmy Rogers' head coaching resume is brief, his 27-3 record and FCS national title speak volumes. The influx of players following him from South Dakota State could jumpstart the rebuild. However, the talent level has clearly dipped from last season, and the departure of 36 players through the transfer portal will test the team's depth.

Given the scale of the changes, 2025 appears destined to be a rebuilding year for Washington State, but there's cautious optimism as the program resets under Rogers.

RECORD PREDICTION: 5-7 (0-2)



UConn HUSKIES

HEAD COACH: Jim L. Mora
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Gordon Sammis
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Matt Brock

RANK: 80

2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 9-4

CONFERENCE RANK: N/A

NATIONAL RANK: N/A

POSTSEASON RESULT: Won the Fenway Bowl

UConn AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: N/A

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE:
2010

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 74th

RETURNING STARTERS: 5
offensive, 3 defensive

KEY LOSSES: DB Malcolm Bell,
LB Langston Hardy, WR TJ Sheff-
field, DL Pryce Yates

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Caleb
Burton III, OL Ty Chan, DL
Trent Jones II, LB Tyquan King,
DB Tyrece Mills, DB Sammy
Anderson Jr.

OFFENSE: Promoting Gordon Sammis to of-
fensive coordinator proved to be a smart move
for Jim Mora, as UConn's offense saw a major
boost in production last season.

Quarterback Joe Fagano returns after an
impressive 2024 campaign, boasting a 5:1
touchdown-to-interception ratio despite battling
injuries. Backup QB Nick Evers also returns with
valuable experience after logging a few starts
last year.

The Huskies' running game was dominant in
2024, and they bring back two of their top three
rushers in Cam Edwards and Mel Brown. East-
ern Illinois transfer MJ Flowers, a 1st team All-
Big South/OVC selection last year, is expected
to earn a significant share of carries as a third
option out of the backfield.



Skyler Bell

Jessica Hill / Harvard Courant

At wide receiver, top target Skyler Bell returns
following a strong season where he averaged
over 17 yards per catch. Starting tight end
Louis Hansen also returns, and the Huskies bol-
stered their receiving corps by adding multiple
transfers from the portal including Caleb Burton
III from Auburn.

Center Wes Hoeh is the lone returning starter
on the offensive line, but under Mora, UConn's
offensive front has shown consistent devel-
opment. Despite yearly changes, the Huskies
have maintained solid pass protection and
created strong running lanes that have been the
identity of Mora's UConn teams.

DEFENSE: First-year defensive coordinator
Matt Brock orchestrated a significant turn-
around for UConn's defense in 2024, cutting
yards allowed per game from over 400 to just
under 350. 2025 will be another year where
Brock will look to cut down on their yards
allowed.

While the defensive line doesn't return extensive
production, the Huskies added multiple power
conference transfers to strengthen the front.
Nebraska's Vincent Jackson and Iowa State's
Trent Jones bring valuable experience to the
rotation. Returning linemen like Kervins Choute
and Matt Hoffman should shore up the rotation
and give the Huskies valuable depth.

Though several key linebackers departed, Kan-
sas State transfer Terry Kirksey should bolster
the pass rush, while Tyquan King, coming off a
solid season at Temple, adds stability.

The secondary returns redshirt sophomore

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 30	Central Connecticut
Sept. 6	@ Syracuse
Sept. 13	@ Delaware
Sept. 20	Ball State
Sept. 27	@ Buffalo
Oct. 4	FIU
Oct. 11	BYE
Oct. 18	@ Boston College
Oct. 25	@ Rice
Nov. 1	UAB
Nov. 8	Duke
Nov. 15	Air Force
Nov. 22	@ FAU
Nov. 29	BYE

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	11/15
RUNNINGBACK:	6/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	6/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	10/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	9/15
LINEBACKERS:	5/10
SECONDARY:	6/10
COACHING:	8/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	2/5
OVERALL:	63/100

standout Cam Chadwick, fresh off a breakout
season, along with starters Malachi Mclean and
D'Mon Brinson. Mora has also made UConn a
popular landing spot for former power con-
ference players, adding Penn State transfer
Tyrece Mills to the defensive backfield.

OVERVIEW: Jim Mora's Huskies engineered
one of the most remarkable turnarounds of the
2024 season, flipping their win total from three
to nine despite a largely unchanged strength
of schedule. Both new coordinator hires played
pivotal roles in this success.

All four of UConn's losses last season came
against power conference opponents, with
three decided by just one score.

With the roster steadily improving, the Huskies
have a real shot at knocking off one or more
of their three ACC opponents on the schedule
and building on their impressive momentum
heading into 2025.

RECORD PREDICTION: 9-3

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

HEAD COACH: Marcus Freeman
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Denbrock
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Ash

RANK: 4



2024 SEASON IN REVIEW

RECORD: 14-2

CONFERENCE RANK: N/A

NATIONAL RANK: 2nd

POSTSEASON RESULT: Lost the National Championship

NOTRE DAME AT A GLANCE

CONFERENCE: N/A

LAST CONFERENCE TITLE: N/A

RETURNING PRODUCTION RANK: 62nd

RETURNING STARTERS: 5 offensive, 6 defensive

KEY LOSSES: QB Riley Leonard, DB Xavier Watts, DB Benjamin Morrison, LB Jack Kiser, DL Rylie Mills, TE Mitchell Evans

KEY ADDITIONS: WR Malachi Fields, WR Elijah Burrese, DB DeVonta Smith, LB Madden Faraimo, DB Cree Thomas, DB Jalen Stroman

OFFENSE: Mike Denbrock's offense leaned on a punishing run game in 2024 to offset inconsistent quarterback play. After a sluggish 14-point showing in a loss to Northern Illinois early in the season, the Fighting Irish found their rhythm—and are better equipped to avoid similar lapses in 2025.

The quarterback competition has narrowed to redshirt freshman CJ Carr and redshirt sophomore Kenny Minchey. Both are former four-star prospects but lack meaningful college snaps, meaning Notre Dame will be rolling with an unproven starter no matter who wins the job.

Whoever emerges will benefit from arguably the best RB duo in the country. Jeremiyah Love and Jadarian Price combined for nearly 2,000 yards last season and will once again serve as the



Jeremiyah Love

Rick Kimball / Irish Sports Daily

engine of this offense in 2025.

The wide receiver room gets a huge boost with the addition of Virginia transfer Malachi Fields, one of the top portal grabs of the offseason. Returning leading receiver Jaden Greathouse and a cast of reliable contributors round out a deep and versatile group.

Up front, Notre Dame brings back center Ashton Craig and the entire left side of an offensive line that remains one of the best in the nation. Under Marcus Freeman, physicality in the trenches has become a defining trait of this program.

DEFENSE: The backbone of Notre Dame's return to national contention has been its elite defense. New coordinator Chris Ash inherits a unit that ranked among the nation's best in 2024, and returns to the college game after last serving as Texas' DC in 2020.

A reloaded defensive line welcomes back multiple players from injury, including veterans Jordan Botelho and Boubacar Traore, along with rising talent Bryce Young. With depth and talent across the board, this front is once again among the best in the country.

The linebacker room is another strength, led by third-year starter Drayk Bowen and second-year starter Jaylen Sneed. Jaiden Ausberry adds even more versatility to a group that can rotate and adapt at a high level.

The secondary loses two of its top playmakers but still projects to be among the nation's best. Cornerbacks Leonard Moore and Christian

2025 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	BYE
Aug. 31	@ Miami (FL)
Sept. 6	BYE
Sept. 13	Texas A&M
Sept. 20	Purdue
Sept. 27	@ Arkansas
Oct. 4	Boise State
Oct. 11	NC State
Oct. 18	USC
Oct. 25	BYE
Nov. 1	@ Boston College
Nov. 8	Navy
Nov. 15	@ Pittsburgh
Nov. 22	Syracuse
Nov. 29	@ Stanford

POSITIONAL RATINGS

QUARTERBACK:	13/15
RUNNINGBACK:	10/10
PASS-CATCHERS:	8/10
OFFENSIVE LINE:	15/15
DEFENSIVE LINE:	14/15
LINEBACKERS:	9/10
SECONDARY:	9/10
COACHING:	10/10
SPECIAL TEAMS:	4/5
OVERALL:	92/100

Gray return as starters, while Adon Shuler steps into a critical role at safety to help maintain this group's elite standard.

OVERVIEW: Notre Dame's 2024 campaign could have easily unraveled after a shocking home loss to Northern Illinois, but instead it became a story of resilience. That response—turning a season on the brink into a run to the national title game—was a testament to the culture Marcus Freeman has built.

The Irish enter 2025 with every reason to believe they can contend again. The quarterback position is the only significant question mark, but even moderate improvement over last year's play should raise the ceiling for this offense.

Notre Dame faces a slightly tougher schedule this fall, but still has a clear path to the College Football Playoff—and now knows firsthand what it takes to compete once they get there.

RECORD PREDICTION: 11-1

BUDGE'S COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF BRACKET AND PREDICTIONS



68 VENTURES

MAC VS SUN BELT

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
VS
NORTHERN ILLINOIS

ALAMO

BIG 12 VS PAC-12

TCU
VS
OREGON STATE

ARIZONA

MAC VS MOUNTAIN WEST

OHIO
VS
COLORADO STATE

ARMED FORCES

BIG 12 VS ACC/CUSA

ARMY
VS
CINCINNATI

BAHAMAS

CUSA VS MAC

WESTERN KENTUCKY
VS
BUFFALO

BIRMINGHAM

SEC VS AAC/ACC

NC STATE
VS
MISSOURI

BOCA RATON

AAC/CUSA/MAC/SUN BELT

SAN JOSE STATE
VS
SOUTHERN MISS

CITRUS

BIG TEN VS SEC

INDIANA
VS
GEORGIA

CURE

AAC/CUSA/MAC/SUN BELT

NAVY
VS
GEORGIA SOUTHERN

DUKE'S MAYO

ACC VS SEC

DUKE
VS
TENNESSEE

FENWAY

ACC VS AAC

VIRGINIA
VS
UTSA

BUDGE'S BOWL PROJECTIONS

FOR THE 2025 SEASON

FIRST RESPONDER

BIG 12 VS AAC/CUSA/ACC

BYU
VS
SMU

FRISCO

AAC/CUSA/MAC/SUN BELT

FLORIDA ATLANTIC
VS
LOUISIANA

GASPARILLA

SEC VS ACC/AAC

FLORIDA
VS
MEMPHIS

GATOR

SEC VS ACC

LOUISVILLE
VS
AUBURN

GUARANTEED RATE

BIG 12 VS BIG TEN

IOWA
VS
KANSAS STATE

HAWAII

MOUNTAIN WEST VS CUSA

HAWAII
VS
SOUTH FLORIDA

HOLIDAY

PAC-12 VS ACC

NORTH CAROLINA
VS
USC

IDAHO POTATO

MAC VS MOUNTAIN WEST

MIAMI (OH)
VS
UNLV

INDEPENDENCE

PAC-12/BIG 12 VS ACC

SYRACUSE
VS
UCONN

LOS ANGELES

MOUNTAIN WEST VS PAC-12

BOISE STATE
VS
COLORADO

LIBERTY

SEC VS BIG 12

IOWA STATE
VS
MICHIGAN STATE

MILITARY

ACC VS AAC

VIRGINIA TECH
VS
NORTH TEXAS

MUSIC CITY

BIG TEN VS SEC

SOUTH CAROLINA
VS
MICHIGAN

MYRTLE BEACH

AAC/CUSA/MAC/SUN BELT

EAST CAROLINA
VS
TEXAS STATE

NEW MEXICO

MOUNTAIN WEST VS CUSA

UTEP
VS
LIBERTY

NEW ORLEANS

CUSA VS SUN BELT

LOUISIANA TECH
VS
JAMES MADISON

PINSTRIPLE

BIG TEN VS ACC

FLORIDA STATE
VS
ILLINOIS

POP-TARTS

ACC VS BIG 12

MIAMI (FL)
VS
BAYLOR

RELIAQUEST

BIG TEN VS SEC

MINNESOTA
VS
OLE MISS

SALUTE TO VETERANS

SUN BELT VS MAC/CUSA

AIR FORCE
VS
SOUTH ALABAMA

SPORTS

MAC VS BIG TEN

NEBRASKA
VS
TOLEDO

SUN

ACC VS PAC-12

PITTSBURGH
VS
UTAH

TEXAS

BIG 12 VS SEC

TEXAS TECH
VS
TEXAS A&M

VEGAS

PAC-12 VS BIG TEN

RUTGERS
VS
WASHINGTON



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